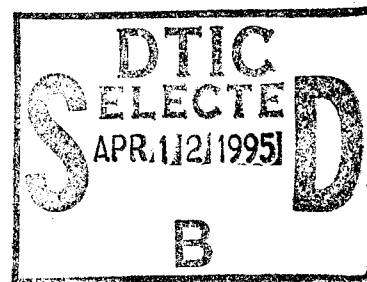


# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA



## THESIS

### THE ROOTS OF JAPANESE MILITARISM

by

Henry J. Hendrix II

December, 1994

Thesis Advisor:

Claude A. Buss

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THE ROOTS  
OF  
JAPANESE MILITARISM

by

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Lieutenant, United States Navy  
B.A., Purdue University, 1988

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

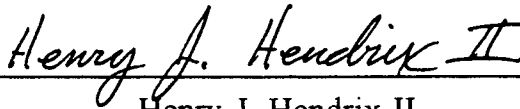
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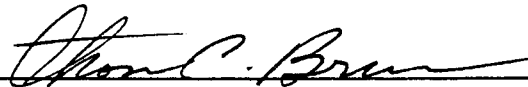
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## ABSTRACT

Militarism in pre-World War II Japan was a product of Japan's culture, manifested within its distinctive internal domestic institutions, stimulated by the encroaching external pressures, and is distinct from militarism anywhere else in the world.

The culture of Japan emphasized the group over the individual, a strong sense of hierarchy, and a profound pride in the divine nature of the national essence. The abrupt intrusion of the technologically advanced Western civilization triggered an "insider-outsider" mentality within Japan that rejected participation in the Western diplomatic, and economic cabals which denied Japan its true equal (or, to some, superior) position in the community of nations. Japan's pre-war militarism clearly can be defined as the mobilization of the entire society, drawing upon an essentially homogeneous outlook, to achieve a position within the international system which reflected the cultural perception of Japan's "chosen" status (derived from centuries of Shinto influence) within the family of man. The martial segments within Japanese society used the "alien" international system, largely defined at the time in Imperial-colonial-military terms, to buttress the martial segments within Japanese society and to justify the expansion of their influence.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	DEFINITIONS AND DILEMMA.....	5
A.	MILITARISM DEFINED.....	5
B.	THE SPECTRUM OF MILITARISM.....	6
C.	THE DILEMMA OF JAPANESE MILITARISM.....	7
III.	THE ORIGINS OF THE STATE.....	9
A.	CLAN CULTURE.....	9
B.	CHINESE CULTURAL INFLUENCES.....	12
C.	THE EMERGENCE OF THE SAMURAI.....	17
D.	UNIFICATION.....	26
IV.	PRELUDE TO MILITARISM.....	35
A.	INTERNAL REVOLUTION.....	35
B.	IMITATION OF THE WEST.....	43
C.	IMPERIAL ASPIRATIONS.....	50
D.	TAISHO DEMOCRACY.....	57
V.	THE ARMY AND THE PEOPLE.....	63
A.	THE PEOPLE.....	63
B.	AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS.....	69
C.	THE RISE OF MILITARY FACTIONS.....	71
D.	JAPANESE MILITARISM IN BLOOM.....	78
VI.	A TRANSITIONAL VERDICT ON JAPANESE MILITARISM .....	93
APPENDIX A.	RESCRIPT ON EDUCATION.....	105
APPENDIX B.	RESCRIPT TO SOLDIERS AND SAILORS.....	107
APPENDIX C.	POTSDAM PROCLAMATION.....	113
APPENDIX D.	AUGUST 14, 1945 RESCRIPT.....	117

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LIST OF REFERENCES .....	121
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST.....	127

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is militarism, and how has it taken a specific meaning when applied to Japan? Contemporary attempts at deriving a universal definition of militarism have been less than precise, yielding products which, although attractive in a broad theoretical setting, are unable to explain the varying historical manifestations of militarism in the different regions of the world. The failure to arrive at a useful understanding of militarism, in Japan, Germany, or anywhere else, lies in a misbegotten assumption of conceptual universality.

Concepts such as freedom, democracy, war, and even militarism differ in meaning from one ethnic or geographical region to the next. This suggests that a useful definition of the concept of Japanese militarism must be derived from the impact of culture and history within the distinctive Japanese context. Only by beginning at the beginning can one expect to interpret the meaning behind Japan's past actions, or to project a reasonable hypothesis of its future endeavors.

Beginning with the clan-*uji*-units that existed before recorded history on the Japanese islands, a number of themes emerged which have guided Japanese thought to the present day. The most recognizable effect of the clan period was the development of the extended Japanese national family. Just as each individual in sixth century Japan knew his or her position in the complex, family-based, hierarchical structure that comprised the clan, so to did each Japanese in the third decade of this century recognize and acknowledge his or her position in the extended hierarchical structure of the Imperial state.

The notion of the extended "Japanese" national family was strengthened by the continuing influence of Japan's native religion, Shinto. Within the doctrines of Shinto all Japanese are descendants of a group of primal deities who created the Japanese islands thousands of years before. As

the living descendants of Amaterasu, the preeminent, life giving sun goddess, the Yamato clan established itself as the rulers and high priests of the islands. Nearly a millennium and a half later the clan's leader, Emperor Hirohito, reigned during World War Two as a reminder of the Yamato race's divine origin, and as a father figure for the greatly extended modern Japanese family.

Other religions and philosophies also left their mark upon militarism's development. Confucianism provided structure to the irregular, chaotic proceedings of the early Japanese court. Later, the spread of Buddhism to the Japanese islands, with its emphasis on ceremony, distracted the Imperial court and allowed the military Shogunates to gain predominance. Seeking to advance their own interests, the military governments at Kamakura, Kyoto, and later Edo promoted the influence of Zen amongst the military class. A hybrid of Chinese Confucianism and Buddhism, Zen evolved in Japan to incorporate and reflect the nation's own native Shinto beliefs. This emerging philosophy contributed in its own way to the Bushido Code, which held little regard for life, valuing instead a stable social order, personal honor, loyalty, and sacrifice in the name of duty to one's superior.

The revolutionary fervor of the Meiji Restoration in the nineteenth century destroyed many of the ineffectual social and governmental structures of Japan's feudal era, replacing them with efficient Western models which had been formed in the foundry's of the industrial revolution. Ancient court councils and bloated military bureaucracies were replaced by parliamentary cabinets, traditional clothing disappeared, samurai no longer wore their swords, and a new conscription army protected the young government. By the end of the nineteenth century Japanese militarism had become, by all outward appearances, like its counterparts in the West, but, despite its Western facade, in its heart it remained

Japanese. Nowhere was this fact more evident than in the Imperial Army.

The leaders of the Imperial Army were more than willing to adapt superior Western uniforms, weapons, and tactics to their cause, and they were open to the advantages of an conscription army in the age of total mobilization, but they were also intent on maintaining the elemental Japanese characteristics of their organization and culture. Orders flowed within a chain of command shaped not by liberal notions of individual equality, but by the strict social regulation of Asian Confucianism. Military leaders preserved the traditional dual nature of the Japanese government by subjugating the military, within the framework of the Meiji constitution, directly to the Emperor as opposed to the parliamentary cabinet. In the end, the conscription army served as a conduit for the transmission of the Bushido Code of the samurai to the entire breadth and width of the nation, profoundly impacting its development.

A perceived threat to the divine "national essence" of the Japanese state arrived with the international system which had so rudely awakened Japan from its long sleep of isolation in 1854. Imposing the treaty condition of extraterritoriality upon the less advanced Japanese, Western powers unwittingly bruised the fierce pride of the "divine" Yamato race. While the cries of "revere the Emperor-expel the barbarians" soon faded, replaced by "revere the Emperor-strengthen the nation," the Japanese never forgot the humiliation of the unequal treaties and worked constantly to gain acknowledgement of Japanese equality. Treaty revision coincided with the Japan's first large scale military venture onto the Asian mainland, but many of the advances of that successful campaign were subsequently lost in diplomatic bargaining after the guns fell silent. Japan entered the twentieth century convinced of the unfair nature of Western diplomacy, and that international respect came only through aggression, the possession of land, and power.

Hence, by the commencement of hostilities on the Asian continent in the nineteen thirties, Japan's military had established a preeminent and leading role in Japanese society. Cultural traditions established over centuries of feudal rule aided the militarists as they preserved their predominant role, first established in 1185, in the formulation of national policy, independent of the civil government. Japanese society, coopted and indoctrinated by the conscription army and its auxiliary representatives in the rural villages, came to support the militarists in their effort to establish "National Unity." Careful cultivation of the Shinto cult encouraged the populace to accept the military as true leaders of the nation, representing the pure characteristics of Japanese culture.

Hence, Japanese militarism, as a political phenomenon, had at its base a purely Japanese, cultural foundation, and as such is distinct other occurrences of militarism in the world. In a very real sense Japan's pre-war militarism can be defined as the mobilization of the entire society, drawing upon the essentially homogeneous nature of that society, to achieve a position within the international system which reflected the cultural perception of Japan's "chosen" status (derived from centuries of Shinto influence) within the family of man. That the "alien" international system was largely defined at the time in Imperial-colonial-military terms only served to buttress the martial segments within Japanese society in justifying the expansion of their influence.

What does this conclusion imply for Japan? Clearly it suggests that Japanese "militarism," rooted in the very "Japaneseness" of that society, could not be destroyed simply by taking away the nation's military capabilities. Although the cultural aspiration to acquire recognition of Japan's "chosen" position as a leader within the international system met with disaster during World War Two, the cultural belief in Japan's "chosen" status survived.

Alternative venues, distinct from military power, offered Japan the opportunity to rebuild, exercise influence, and to gain recognition of its leadership.

Japan has learned its lesson militarily. It now realizes the inherent vulnerabilities of a nation isolated on the edge of the massive Asian continent, lacking even the most rudimentary raw materials to fuel its economy. However, as its culture develops under the momentum of its own dynamism as well as its continued exposure to external ideas, Japan will likely continue to follow the Emperor's command to, "work with resolution so as ye may enhance the innate glory of the Imperial State" by pursuing the establishment of its "chosen" position within the family of man through economic and diplomatic means.

## I. INTRODUCTION

At 0856 on 2 September 1945 the Japanese delegation arrived at the starboard gangway of the battleship Missouri, the site chosen by the Allied powers for the surrender of the Imperial Japanese government and the ending of World War Two. The climb up the ladder to the main deck was difficult for the leader of the delegation, Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, who had lost a leg in an assassination attempt years before. He was followed by a delegation composed of ten Japanese military officers and dignitaries.<sup>1</sup>

Beneath the glaring eyes of a thousand enemies the Japanese were brusquely shown where to stand and wait for the ceremonies to begin. A band struck up the Star Spangled Banner as General Douglas MacArthur appeared, accompanied by Admirals Nimitz and Halsey. Ponderously, solemnly, the victorious General began to speak; "We are gathered here, representatives of the major warring powers, to conclude a solemn agreement whereby peace may be restored."<sup>2</sup>

As the historic event unfolded, one of the members of the Japanese delegation, Toshikazu Kase, found his eyes uncontrollably drawn to the rows of small Japanese flags painted on the bulkhead of the Missouri, each representing a Japanese ship, submarine, or plane. He wrote later,

I could hardly bear the sight. Heroes of unwritten stories, these were the boys who defied death gaily and gallantly...They were like cherry blossoms, emblems of our national character, swiftly blooming into riotous beauty and falling just as quickly.<sup>3</sup>

At 0925 the surrender proceedings ended, but for the

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<sup>1</sup>Morison, Samuel Eliot, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume XIV: Victory in the Pacific, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1960) pp. 363-365.

<sup>2</sup>MacArthur, Douglas, Reminiscences, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964) p. 275.

<sup>3</sup>Kase, Toshikazu, Journey to the Missouri, (New Haven, 1950) p. 13.

Japanese the process of rebuilding their nation was just beginning. Abject in defeat, hungry, many without homes, and spiritually drained, many Japanese wondered, "How did we arrive at this dismal point?" As more information became available, a growing sense of betrayal arose. The nation's despondence focused on the militarist leaders, not for losing the war, but for leading Japan into the war against such overwhelming odds.<sup>4</sup>

In the search for a scapegoat, few questioned how the militarists came to lead the country, who had supported them, and what were the sources of their power. These are questions that I will explore. My hypothesis is that the "militaristic" movement in Japan that brought about its entry into World War II was an expression of Japan's cultural evolution.

At the root of this hypothesis is my belief that there were certain unique factors which encouraged the manifestation of Japanese militarism in the early half of this century. Looking beneath the superficial, surface manifestations of Japanese militarism, my focus will be on the evolution of Japan's national culture, and its influence upon the mass public, the constitutional civil government, and the "professional" military. It can reasonably be assumed that Japan's prewar militarism was a representation of a national character unique to itself and distinct from similar developments of militarism in other nation-states. This description can be tested by examining:

1. How did Japan's civil society view the civil/military relationship?
2. How did Japan's military view the civil/military relationship?
3. How did the military characterize its role within society?

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<sup>4</sup>Reischauer, Edwin O., The Japanese, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1977) p. 104.

4. How did the civil society characterize the military's role in society?
5. What was the military's view of its position in the of governing of Japan?
6. What was civil society's view of the military's position in the governing of Japan?
7. Against the background of the previous questions, how did Japan view its role in the world community?

The answers to these questions will determine whether Japan's pre-World War II militarist period was indeed a last lingering historical affect of feudal culture. On the basis of these findings, a future examination can be made to determine if, in post-World War II Japan, the acceptance of the democratic process by the general population of Japan and the establishment of strong civilian control of the military forces by the government could allow Japan to pursue a security policy comparable to the policies of Western nations without presenting a threatening presence in the Asian Pacific region.



## II. DEFINITIONS AND DILEMMA

### A. MILITARISM DEFINED

What is militarism, and how has it taken a specific meaning when applied to Japan? It is not simply the opposite of pacifism, nor is it merely the control of a nation by military leaders. These definitions lack completeness in that they fail to encompass the societal basis of militarism or the state policies that it generates.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines militarism as, "...the prevalence of military sentiment and ideals among a people,"<sup>5</sup> while the Encyclopedia Americana defines it as "...policy giving exceptional emphasis to military preparedness" and "...relying on force in international relations."<sup>6</sup> Taken together these definitions describe a society which thinks highly of the military, spends money to equip that military, and then is not above using it to influence others in the world. These definitions still lack precision. Without any other qualifying standards, many nations in the modern era, from Nazi Germany to the United States today, could be classified as militaristic. At least in the case of the United States, this is just not true.

A precise definition of Japanese militarism must encompass the whole spectrum of its society, from its philosophy to its diplomacy. Such a definition for the German state was attempted by the historian Alfred Vagts in his masterpiece on the subject of militarism. He identifies it as,

...the unquestioning embrace of military values, ethos, principles, attitudes; as ranking military institutions and considerations above all others in the state; as finding the heroic predominantly in military service and action, including war--to the preparation of which the nation's main

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<sup>5</sup>The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 1323.

<sup>6</sup>The Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 19, (New York: 1968) p. 59.

interest and resources must be dedicated, with the inevitability and goodness of war always presumed. Such high regard leads to the advocacy of applying military values, organization--notably hierarchical features--to the totality of a nation's life.<sup>7</sup>

## **B. THE SPECTRUM OF MILITARISM**

Vagts derived his definition from the German experience in the Western European environment of the latter nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Within this backdrop, militarism is not the antithesis of pacifism (the love of peace). Instead, Vagts suggests that militarism should be regarded as the antonym of civilianism, a concept which promotes the supremacy of the individual's rights over the needs of the government, and lacks application in Asian cultures which place priority on the group rather than the individual. Additionally, even within the Western context this definition leaves room for dissension when attempting to categorize nations as militaristic.

Marxist writers in the first half of the twentieth century ascribed militaristic tendencies to the United States and other nations of Western Europe, alleging a capitalist-militarist cabal against the masses.<sup>8</sup> Western analysts in recent years have used militaristic terms to describe the activities of the government of Turkey, which has a dynamic military elite which occupies a very strong role within a government known for its liberal institutions.

Western historians have described both Nazi Germany and pre-World War II Japan as militaristic, yet in both of these cases the role of the military, government, and individual interests differed. In Germany, for example, an authoritarian political party used militaristic procedures to carry out an aggressive genocidal war utilizing a highly

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<sup>7</sup>Vagts, Alfred, A History of Militarism, (New York: Meridian Books Inc., 1959) p. 453.

<sup>8</sup>Liebkecht, Karl, Militarism, (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1917).

subordinate military force, but in Japan militarism reached its peak as a dynamic military overcame the growing liberalizing influence of the political parties to implement an authoritarian government bent on military, Imperial aggression.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately all of these examples represent a form of militarism; depending upon one's perspective.

Aside from the attempts to label the United States as militaristic, which ignore its liberal democratic government and its strongly subordinated military, valid arguments have justified the application of militaristic labels.

Differences between Japanese, German, and Turkish models can be found in the peculiar outlook of their peoples and the differing roles and importance assigned to the individual, the military, and the government in each case. These diverging views have little to do with the external force of the international system. Instead they spring from each nation's history and cultural development.

Few ideas are totally universal. Concepts such as freedom, democracy, war, and even militarism differ in meaning from one ethnic or geographical region to the next. This suggests that a useful definition of the concept of Japanese militarism must be derived from the impact of culture and history within the distinctive Japanese context.<sup>10</sup>

### **C. THE DILEMMA OF JAPANESE MILITARISM**

Only by viewing a concept's development in its totality can we expect to arrive at a true understanding of its nature. The dilemma of differing interpretations of fundamental concepts arise from differences in culture, history, and national expectations. For example, a researcher investigating the nature of the U.S. foreign

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<sup>9</sup>Huntington, Samuel P., The Soldier and the State, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1957) pp. 98-139.

<sup>10</sup>Ruggie, John G., "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity," in Keohane, Robert O., (edt.) Neorealism And Its Critics, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) p. 152.

policy of 1914 would be hard pressed to understand the reasoning behind the neo-isolationist statements of Wilson and Bryan, unless he had accompanying knowledge of the Puritan ethic, the foreign policies of Washington and Jefferson, and the mercantilist economic policies of the United States in the 19th century.

A study of Japan's militaristic policy must build upon this approach. Only by beginning at the beginning can one expect to interpret the meaning behind Japan's actions. Accordingly, I shall begin with an investigation of the historical roots and development of the Japanese state in an attempt to ascertain the basic cultural traits which formed the "lenses" of Japan's view of the world. Next will be a study of Japan's emergence from isolation and the impact of Western ideas on Japan's core beliefs, followed by an analysis of the policies and actions of Japan's leaders during the decisive decade of the nineteen-thirties. Finally, I shall analyze the events surrounding Japan's decision to surrender in 1945, deriving a new definition of Japanese militarism and the implications of that definition to Japan and the world.

### III. THE ORIGINS OF THE STATE

What is the spirit of Yamato's ancient land?  
It is like the wild cherry blossoms,  
Radiant in the rising sun.<sup>11</sup>

The cherry blossom which blooms so brightly and so briefly has become a symbol to the Japanese nation. In the spring millions of trees bloom throughout the Japanese islands, and the nation leaves the workplace to walk, laugh, sit, and stare at the multitude of blossoms before they fall. Japan's militarist leaders likened the cherry blossom to the warrior, who could only expect a short life in which to bloom, to dazzle, and then, in a sweep of the wind, disappear. To understand the blossom, one must examine the tree, its limbs, the trunk, the seed, and the soil from which it sprang. So it is with nations. Nations derive their character from the events that influence their growth. The fundamental properties of Japanese militarism lie in the Japaneseness of that militarism.

This opening chapter examines the early historical evolution of the Japanese state to determine the soil, seed, roots, and trunk of its national character. This examination of the basic clan, or *uji* units that have existed in Japan since the beginning of recorded history reveal the Chinese influence on Japanese society and the subsequent development of feudal hierarchy and bureaucracy which formed the properties necessary to produce Japan's distinctive outlook on the world.

#### A. CLAN CULTURE

The origins of the Japanese people are shrouded in mystery. Displaying physical characteristics of Asian, Polynesian, and Caucasian peoples, the inhabitants of the Japanese islands appear to have emigrated from different regions and arrived on the islands in waves, bringing new influences to the island's societal development with each

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<sup>11</sup>Morris, Ivan, The Nobility of Failure, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1975) p. 290.

new migration.<sup>12</sup> The diverse collection of peoples and languages produced a system of rival clans whose entire populace would take up arms while fighting for land and supremacy, thus developing a pervasive martial spirit. Constant competition resulted in the growth of some clans through the absorption of their competition either through marriage or conquest. Unpacified, aboriginal tribes, such as the Ainu and the Kumaso, were pushed to the northeast and southwest respectively, isolated from the evolving central state, consigned to a destiny of segregation or extinction.<sup>13</sup>

Warring competition forced the clans to develop autonomous supporting structures. Trade guilds developed to supply the necessary weapons, tools, and cookware for everyday life. Prisoners became slaves, serving the victors until time, new enemies, and romance brought about their incorporation into the clan. Generations of warfare produced a semblance of civil order on the central plain of Honshu in the form of the powerful Yamato clan, the progenitor of the modern Imperial family, the supreme clan among equals. However, while the Yamato Emperor-chief did exercise direct control over his own clan, his control over other clans was indirect, through their own chiefs (*uji no kami*) who, like the Emperor, were hereditary leaders.<sup>14</sup>

Shinto, a native religion that developed with the clan society, supported this loose confederation. As in many early cultures, the early Japanese clans perceived gods (*kami*) and magic in the world around them. Rocks,

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<sup>12</sup>Smith, Robert J., and Beardsley, Richard K., Japanese Culture: Its Development and Characteristics, (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1962) pp. 3-10.

<sup>13</sup>Sansom, G. B., Japan, A Short Cultural History, (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1962) pp. 25-28.

<sup>14</sup>Brown, Delmer M., "Introduction," The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 18-20.

waterfalls, the sun, and the moon were all supernatural beings to be worshiped. Clans, influenced by their surroundings, worshiped different kami. Clans which drew their sustenance from the sea worshipped the kami of the sea, while agricultural clans honored the kami who influenced the growth of crops. Clan chiefs identified themselves as the descendants of these kami, thus linking themselves more closely with nature and granting themselves the prestige of a divine origin.<sup>15</sup> Hence competition between the clans became a competition between the kami that the clans worshiped, played out on a supernatural stage. Defeats in battle were explained by the differences in the strength of the individual kami.

The ascendancy of the power of the Yamato clan during the early centuries of the first millennium confirmed the Yamato ancestor-kami, Amaterasu, the sun goddess, as the chief kami within the Shinto hierarchy. Clans of influence, such as the Nakatomi and the Imibe court families, traced their descent from the gods associated with the sun-goddess in mythology. Not missing the importance of Shinto in legitimizing the position of the Yamato clan, the Emperors, in their role as the high priests of the sun-goddess cult, carefully shaped and molded the myths of the island state to support the Yamato's claim to supremacy among the clans of the island.<sup>16</sup>

The seeds of Japanese militarism can be found in the earliest customs of the clan period (Circa 50 B.C.-552 A.D.). Warring clans which engaged their entire populace in the competition for land encouraged the growth of the martial spirit needed to sustain a weak central government. Lacking a credible external enemy, this confederation sought

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<sup>15</sup>Duus, Peter, Feudalism in Japan, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1976) p. 17.

<sup>16</sup>Noss, David S., and Noss, Jon B., A History Of the World's Religions, (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1990), pp. 325-326.

to unite the national polity under the leadership of the high priest of the Yamato clan by recognizing him as the spiritual leader of the Japanese state. Early Japanese patriotism became synonymous with the Shinto belief that Japan was a divine land of the gods, and its people, due to their divine descent, were "chosen" or unique because of this.<sup>17</sup> The weak government would grow stronger, but the belief in the divine nature of Japan served as a central rallying point for militaristic forces throughout Japan's history.

#### **B. CHINESE CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

China's influence in the development of Japan had been ongoing affair, but the journals of a Buddhist missionary from Korea, who arrived in Japan in 552 AD, presents the first clear documentation of this process.<sup>18</sup> Buddhism, over the next thousand years, would become the vehicle for the transmission of knowledge and culture from China to Japan, but even the transmission of this peaceful religion could not avoid contributing to militarism's development. During the sixth century Buddhist factions in the Japanese court repeatedly attempted to introduce the new faith at court only to be blocked by Shinto traditionalists. In 587 AD the leader of the Soga clan, Soga no Umako, asked the dying Emperor Yomei to allow Buddhist ceremonies at court. The Emperor, hoping that the new god would prolong his life, assented. In a pitched battle following the Emperor's death blood flowed in the streets of the capital as rival clan struggled for power. Buddhism, a philosophy of peace, gained its permanent place in Japanese society through the

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<sup>17</sup>Kitabatake, Chikafusa, A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns, Varley, H. Paul, trans., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) p. 50.

<sup>18</sup>Reischauer, Edwin O., The Japanese Today, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) p. 18.

defeat of the traditional Shinto factions in battle.<sup>19</sup>

Remembering the legitimizing features of the Shinto religion, the Emperors quietly continued to carry out the ceremonial rites of Shinto along with the new Buddhist practices. This is the first clear demonstration of the Japanese propensity to adapt new philosophies while maintaining what is essential to their core identity.

Another trait of Japanese power politics was began when Soga no Umako married members of his family into the royal line. In 592 AD his young niece, the Empress Suiko, was enthroned and the half-Soga Prince Mumayado no Toyotomimi was named Regent.<sup>20</sup> This Regent is remembered in history by another name: Shotoku.

There is, aside from the mythical, founding Emperor Jimmu, no other within Japan's history who occupies such an exalted place in the nation's memory as Shotoku. Legend recounts that his birth was miraculous in nature, occurring spontaneously as his mother visited the Imperial stables. Even as a baby he could speak as an adult, and his wisdom was such that, "he could attend the suits of ten men at once and decide them all without error."<sup>21</sup> It was also alleged within his lifetime that he could predict future events, but his chief contribution to the state is reflected in his court title; Toyotomimi-Master King of the Law.<sup>22</sup>

The conflicts between clans, so common during this period of weak central authority, served to remind Shotoku that his family's high position in the Imperial court stood

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<sup>19</sup>Nihongi, Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697, translated by W.G. Aston (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1972) pp. 110-115.

<sup>20</sup>Varley, H. Paul, "Early Japan," An Introduction to Japanese Civilization, Tiedemann, Arthur E., Edt., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974) pp. 22-23.

<sup>21</sup>Nihongi, p. 122.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. p. 108.

upon shaky ground. Perhaps due to this instability, Shotoku's studies of Chinese culture concentrated primarily on the philosophies of governing. Attempting to stabilize societal structure, he issued an edict in 604 AD which has been recorded as the Shotoku constitution. It is ironic that Shotoku, whose family had championed the Buddhist religion in the Imperial court, would establish a central government for Japan based upon Confucian principles.

Confucianism, a philosophy first espoused in the teachings of the Taoist scholar-bureaucrat Confucius (551-479 BC), promotes the Tao goal of harmony through the strict observance of social, hierarchical relationships and the pursuit of virtue. The Confucian relationships were between the parent and the child, the older brother and the younger, between the husband and the wife, between the old and the young, and between the ruler and the subject.<sup>23</sup> Confucian relationships were based upon the ethic of reciprocity; the loyalty of the child, younger brother, wife, younger person, or subject must be returned through consideration of their needs.

A clear product of Confucianism, the Shotoku seventeen article constitution codified the supremacy of the Emperor (Article III), the importance of hierarchy (Article IV), and the right of the central government to govern (Article XII).<sup>24</sup> However, while the five relationships remained common to each culture, differences developed in interpretation and application. In China the relationship between the subject and the ruler allows for the disavowal of the ruler if he should lack virtue. In Japan the divine nature of the Emperor, as a descendent of the sun goddess, made his actions virtuous by definition; revolt against his

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<sup>23</sup>Noss, p 326.

<sup>24</sup>De Bary, Wm. Theodore, Keene, Donald, and Tsunoda, Ryusaku, Sources of Japanese Tradition Vol. I, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 48-51.

Imperial wishes was unthinkable. A thousand years later the virtuous nature of the Imperial will would be perverted to justify Japanese expansion onto the Asian continent.

Forgetting this tenet, the Soga family in the early decades of the seventh century began to invest themselves with Imperial prerogatives. Their greedy grab for power paved the way for the return of the Soga rivals, the Nakatomi clan (minus its anti-Buddhist rhetoric) to the center of influence, eliminating the Soga as a power at the Imperial court. The half-Soga Empress Kogyoku abdicated.<sup>25</sup>

Her successor, Prince Naka no Ohoye, was a charismatic young man. Brave, he was a warrior in the traditional sense, leading Japanese armies to victory in Korea. Intelligent, he built a device that tracked the hours of the day through the flow of water between buckets, and great "cloud chariots" which could be used to look over the walls of enemy installations.<sup>26</sup> Although he naturally attracted people to his cause, his humility kept others in the court from suspecting that he harbored any personal ambitions for the throne.

The elevation of the young Prince to power in 662 AD heralded a marked centralization of power in the Imperial court. Assisted by his friend and councilor Nakatomi no Kamatari, the Emperor Tenchi (Heavenly Intelligence) continued the Shotoku consolidation of power in a central government by issuing a series of reform edicts that became known as the Taika (Great Change) reforms.<sup>27</sup> These reforms sought to gain control of the outlying areas through a system of provincial deputies answerable to the central government. Carried out over a fifty-year period, reform abolished the great, untaxable, land holdings, and

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<sup>25</sup>Kitabatake, pp. 130-135.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, p. 264-265.

<sup>27</sup>Sansom, Japan, A Short Cultural History, pp. 94-96.

implemented a uniform system of taxes that weakened the power of the clans. In the background, Japan's first permanent capital in Nara, built along the lines of the great Chinese capital Xian, came into being. Due to health considerations, the capital moved twice more before settling in Heian (the original name of Kyoto) in 784, where the Imperial court of Japan would reign until 1867.<sup>28</sup>

For his roles in the overthrow of the Soga clan and the reform of the central government, Nakatomi no Kamatari received a new surname, Fujiwara, a name that exerted great influence in Japan during the next four centuries.<sup>29</sup> Taking a lesson from the Soga clan, the Fujiwara family cemented their supremacy within the court by marrying their daughters into the Imperial family, enthroning young Emperors, and acting as Regents. In a parallel development, the civil government was dominated by ministers who happened to bear the Fujiwara name, firmly establishing the proclivity of Japanese to operate from "behind the curtain."<sup>30</sup> The years of Fujiwara dominance established the precedent of dual government in which the Emperor reigned while others ruled, leaving the Imperial institution open for manipulation in the centuries that followed. However, it appears that at no time did the members of the Fujiwara family contemplate usurping the Imperial line and claiming the throne for themselves. By the ninth century, the divine origin of the Emperor had reached a point of universal acceptance.

The Fujiwara period (857-1160) was characterized by the decline of the central government. The land reforms of the Shotoku and Taika periods were overtaken by the growth of large, tax-free estates in the outlying provinces. By the tenth century the national tax paying domain disappeared, .

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<sup>28</sup>Murdoch, James, A History of Japan, Vol. I, (New York: Fredrick Ungear Publishing Co., 1964) pp. 207-208.

<sup>29</sup>Nihongi, p. 291.

<sup>30</sup>Kitabatake, p. 166.

financially strangling the developing central government. The leaders of the government, strapped for money, decided that they had learned all there was to learn from the Chinese, ended the costly diplomatic and cultural exchanges with the continent. A hereditary aristocracy that enjoyed the rising material wealth of tax-free estates while contributing little to the authority of the court replaced the Confucian ideal of a bureaucratic hierarchy based on merit.<sup>31</sup>

Confucianism had supplied the stabilizing attributes of regularity and hierarchy to Japanese society, providing a philosophical support to the rough social order of the clan period. Consolidation of power in a powerful central government provided an opportunity to move Japanese society forward together, but the moment of Imperial effectiveness was brief. Chinese influence, receding like a tide, gave way to the diffuse interests of the small aristocratic groups, remnants of the great uji clans of the past, that surrounded the Imperial family. Japanese society had evolved under the influences of outside culture, but in its heart it remembered and maintained what is essentially Japanese.

### **C. THE EMERGENCE OF THE SAMURAI**

As cultural borrowing from China ended, Buddhism, which was in decline in India and China, began to expand in Japan. However, just as with other aspects of cultural borrowing, the Japanese altered Buddhist principles so that it might more closely match Japanese traditions. Magical prayers, elaborate ceremonies, and the proliferation of art characterized the period, at the expense of philosophical content. Appreciation of harmony, which was common to Shinto, Confucianism, and Buddhism became central in Japanese culture, and expressed itself in the ceremonies,

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<sup>31</sup>Fairbank, John K., and Reischauer, Edwin O., East Asia, The Great Tradition, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960) pp. 504-509.

art, and deliberations of the Japanese ruling court.<sup>32</sup>

While the court weakened, nobles diligently pursued the development of their estates in the outlying provinces. The organization of these estates began to resemble the uji-clans of the pre-Nara period. The influence of Chinese ancestor worship and notions of filial piety began to have an effect at the provincial level, reinforcing the cohesion between local leaders and followers.<sup>33</sup> Loyalty to the immediate superior or military protector took priority over loyalties to the Emperor or to the clan. The family based social structure gave way to a new hierarchy built upon the needs of the estate. Cultivators, who harvested and produced the goods of the estate, provided the base. Next came the estate *buke*, or constable-foremen, and their families, who managed and protected the land. Aristocratic owners, and their immediate subordinates occupied the peak.<sup>34</sup> This structure provided strong, regionally based groups with the ability to pursue goals of economic and political independence. Increasingly absent owners, heavily involved in the court's ceremonial culture, neglected their responsibilities in the home provinces. Rising incidents of crime in the wake of declining central authority increased local reliance on the *buke* families, and encouraged the growth of a warrior class as the estates raised armies to protect themselves. Combined, these two trends contributed to a growing separation between the local martial elite and the absent cultural aristocracy in Kyoto.

As the competition for land and revenues increased, the importance of the absent aristocratic-owners diminished, leaving the *buke* families, now the heart of a warrior class, to vie with each other for supremacy in the power vacuum.

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<sup>32</sup>Grousset, Rene', The Civilizations of the East: Japan, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941) pp. 114-115.

<sup>33</sup>Sansom, Japan, A Short Cultural History, p. 208.

<sup>34</sup>Duus, pp. 33-35.

that characterized the final days of the Fujiwara period. Feudalism, organized along military lines for the purpose of territorial conquest, defined the reality of Japanese life.

The rise of feudalism climaxed in the conflict between the Minamoto and Taira Houses (also known in Chinese characters as the Genji and Heike). Both Houses descended from the Imperial line, the Minamoto traced their beginnings to the Emperor Saga in 814 AD, while the Taira House was created thirty years later by the Emperor Kammu for his grandson.<sup>35</sup> Each House held large land holdings on the rich central island of Honshu, and each was sought an opportunity to increase its wealth and power through political maneuver, or, if need be, through armed conflict. Emperor Toba's death in 1156 AD left open the question of Imperial succession, providing the catalyst for the war between the two Houses, and ultimately gave rise to the nation's first true militarist, Minamoto Yoritomo.

Yoritomo, as the eventual victor of the Gempei Wars, occupies a place as one of the greatest figures in Japanese history, and yet he is little understood, a character of seeming endless contradictions. His exploits as a military leader were the stuff of legends, his failings as a man have supplied Japanese playwrights with tragic material for generations. A revolutionary who irreversibly altered the structure of government rule in Japan before his death at age 52, Yoritomo's accomplishments were the products of cold, calculated planning, organization, and a social movement which imbued the nation with a *harsh sense of military order*. As a leader he coveted the loyalty of his subordinates, but as a man his suspicious nature drove him to kill his own followers, including two brothers, for fear that they would steal his power. A superb general known for his bravery in battle, Yoritomo often cowered outside of his own capital after a sexual dalliance rather than face the

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<sup>35</sup>Murdoch, p. 236, 252.

jealous wrath of his wife. Ambitious for power, in a world where power was embodied in the Imperial court, Yoritomo ultimately established his center in a military camp two hundred miles from the Emperor's court in Kyoto.

In 1180 AD, after a generation of losses to the Taira House, Minamoto Yoritomo led his armies down from the mountains to defeat his enemies in battle after battle, including the pitched sea battle of Dan-no-ura which claimed the life of the young Taira Emperor as well as the Sacred Sword, one of the three divine treasures. In 1185, seeking revenge for the deaths of his father and two older brothers a generation before, Minamoto Yoritomo defeated the final remnants of the Taira House and coldly ordered the deaths of any survivors.<sup>36</sup>

Minamoto Yoritomo sought to avoid the intrigues of the Imperial court that his predecessors had fallen into by maintaining his power base at Kamakura, in the Kanto region, allowing the Fujiwara family to continue its control of the court, while he controlled the nation. In 1192 AD as the leader of an organized dual government, Yoritomo accepted from the Emperor the title "*Sei-Tai-Shogun*," (barbarian-subduing-generalissimo) and became the recognized military governor of Japan.<sup>37</sup> It would be under the title of "Shogun" that he, and the succeeding military dictators of Japan would rule.

The military government at Kamakura represented the first truly effective central government in Japanese history. The central committee of the high command (a feudal "Joint Chiefs"), whose jurisdiction ranged in scope from law to commerce, relied on consensus, issuing only unanimous decisions. The promulgation of the *Joel* Code

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<sup>36</sup>Mass, Jeffrey P., "The Kamakura bakufu," The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. III, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993) p. 58.

<sup>37</sup>Sansom, Sir George B., A History of Japan to 1334, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958) p. 331.

(*Joëi* was the reign name in place at the time) in 1232 AD (originally issued as a House law for the Minamoto family) provided a legitimizing basis for the martial, hierarchical, social structure that came to dominate Kamakura Japan. Diverging from the hierarchy envisioned by Chinese Confucian scholars, the *Joëi* code firmly established the military as the ruling class in Japan.<sup>38</sup>

The military nature of Yoritomo's climb to prominence had a profound effect upon the development of Japan. Art, theater, and poetry during the Kamakura period (1185-1333) all celebrated the warrior or *samurai* (one who serves) as they were known in the Kamakura capital. Even religion, in the form of Zen, began to change. The new religious outlook placed only fleeting value on one's own existence, instead service to one's liege lord was the ultimate purpose in life. Moving beyond law, tradition began to define a special place for the warrior within Japanese society.

The code of these warriors was simple, if not harsh and reflected values that stretched back to the *uji*.

The warrior does not ask favors from his lord. He counts upon leadership and protection, but he makes no conditions about rewards. The relationship between the two parties subsists upon loyalty alone. The warrior does not question the commands of his lord, but obeys them regardless of his own life, his family, and all his private interests. In defeat he must bear in mind what he owes for past favours and must be ready to die in the cause of his lord, or in the cause of the family or clan of which he is a member. It follows that a warriors life belongs to his lord...<sup>39</sup>

The same type of soldier would appear again in Japanese history, in the sky over enemy ships, just prior to diving upon them in the hope of exchanging their life for the lives of hundreds of the enemy.

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<sup>38</sup>Duus, p. 57.

<sup>39</sup>Sansom, A History of Japan to 1334, p. 360.

At the grass-roots level, the Kamakura government organized the state by installing a samurai-representative in each of the outlying provinces. Charged with policing the provinces and protecting the populace from the marauding thieves which frequented the countryside, these "stewards" funded their activities by collecting taxes in the form of agricultural products, mostly rice; designating a small portion going to the central government in Kamakura. This system of taxes revolutionized government in Japan by destroying the tax-free estate, and uniting the nation under the Kamakura banner, albeit reluctantly in some cases.

When Yoritomo died in 1199 AD, he was succeeded by his sons, both of whom were weak rulers. All but extinct by 1226, the Minamoto family brought from Kyoto a member of the Fujiwara family and adopted him into the Minamoto House. True power in Japan resided with the family of Yoritomo's wife, the Hojo, who had sheltered him in their home province of Izu during the years of Taira control.<sup>40</sup> At the beginning of the thirteenth century, in perhaps the greatest display of behind-the-curtain duality, we find an Emperor, controlled by a court, which is being controlled by a Minamoto (Fujiwara) Shogun, who is in turn being controlled by a Hojo Regent. Control from behind the scenes had become the accepted norm in Japanese politics, and that control rested largely on the power of and loyalty to the sword of the samurai.

The Kamakura government continued for nearly a century and a half after the death of Minamoto Yoritomo, before falling under the weight of internal and external events. The character of the Kamakura government in its early stages mirrored a simple and austere military camp.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, later generations did not possess such characteristics. The fading of the Minamoto line brought

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<sup>40</sup>Murdoch, pp. 428-429.

<sup>41</sup>Sansom, Japan, A Short Cultural History, p. 304.

the Fujiwara family to Kamakura. While the Hojo and their subordinates continued to rule from behind the puppet Shoguns, the Fujiwara-Minamotos began to practice and promote ritual ceremonies imitating those held at the Kyoto court. Samurai, previously employed as military subordinates a generation before, became bored during the period of peace, and began to turn to artistic and political pursuits.<sup>42</sup> The decline of key military virtues handicapped the Kamakura government during the crises of the thirteenth century.

The failure of the Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281 AD can be attributed not to the military prowess of the Japanese, but to freak storms which drove the invader's ships to sea where many of them were destroyed. The Kamakura government, struggling to prepare the country for the two invasions, and subsequent ones that never came, bankrupted itself. Weakened, it was unable to deal with the internal unrest that arose from militant religious groups, who gained influence in the provinces by claiming credit for summoning the decisive *kamikaze* (divine winds) which had destroyed the invasion, demonstrating the continued influence of the native Shinto cult in Japanese thinking. The Imperial court in Kyoto, remembering days of direct Imperial rule, began to agitate against Kamakura authority, while other feudal leaders, forgetting the bonds of loyalty that had tied them to the Kamakura government in the past, began to consider a new hierarchy in Japan.<sup>43</sup>

These forces came together in 1331 behind the leadership of retired Emperor Go-Daigo II, who formed a coalition between the militant monks and disaffected daimyo, and marched against Kamakura. To quell this revolt the

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<sup>42</sup>Sansom, A History of Japan to 1334, pp. 420-422.

<sup>43</sup>Varley, H. Paul, "Cultural Life in Medieval Japan," The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. III, Yamamura, Kozo, Edt., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 455-457.

Shogunate dispatched their own forces under the leadership of General Ashikaga Takauji, who promptly switched sides upon meeting the ex-Emperor's banner. In 1333, their forces destroyed, the Hojo regent, and two hundred members of his family and staff, committed ritual suicide rather than face capture.<sup>44</sup> Already the particular zealous quality of Japanese militarism, which recognized more achievement in dying by one's own hand than living to fight again, was becoming evident.

Go-Daigo II ruled Japan for only a short time. Within a few years, Ashikaga Takauji secured the Shogun commission from the Emperor and transferred power to his capital outside Kyoto. However, his area of influence never extended far beyond the provinces of central Japan.<sup>45</sup> For the next two hundred years the social structure of Japan continued its feudal development without the benefit of central leadership. Militarism, however, did remain, incubating in the ripe environment of provincial competition.

The Confucian based feudal code, which experienced cycles of ascendancy and decline since the days of Shotoku, did not break under the strain of the anarchy that prevailed throughout Japan. Instead it contracted to the confines of the feudal fiefdom, family and other small groups. The Ashikaga period saw Zen philosophy, a skillful blending of the Confucian hierarchy and Buddhist mysticism, support and strengthen the hold of the martial spirit on Japanese culture. Stressing rigid conventions, an avoidance of all excesses in life, and the continuity of life and death, Japanese Zen came to celebrate the martial spirit of the

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<sup>44</sup>Kitabatake, pp. 245-246.

<sup>45</sup>Hane, Mikiso, Japan, A Historical Survey, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972) pp. 105-107.

governing military class.<sup>46</sup>

Spiritually strengthened, but lacking a central controlling authority, the regional powers pursued their ambitions through increasingly organized warfare. Militaristic tendencies extended beyond the *bushi* (warrior) class to the entire population, escalating the level of civil strife. The small, estate domains disappeared, swallowed up by the large feudal domains which, unlike the national government which lacked a hierarchical apex, were complete in their feudal structure. The *daimyo* (great name) feudal leaders, intent on making their domains independent from outside resources, encouraged the production of goods and materials locally, signaling the growth of the trade and merchant classes which, previously, had been restrained by feudal forces.<sup>47</sup>

The Kamakura period stands as a turning point in Japanese history. The weakness of the Imperial civil government led to its decline as an effective ruling power. Into this vacuum stepped military clans who, building upon historical customs that stretched back to a time before the Yamato established their dominance on the Honshu plain, set themselves against each other for the control of the state. Order was established, ostensibly to protect the Imperial institution, by a military class which created hierarchical lines of social authority. Art, poetry, and custom celebrated the virtues of the military camp. For the next eight hundred years militarist thought would dominate Japan's culture.

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<sup>46</sup>In his book, A Book of Five Rings, (New York: The Overlook Press, 1974) the 16th century swordmaster Miyamoto Musashi pays tribute to Shinto, Buddhist, Confucian, and Zen beliefs within the first two sentences of the first paragraph.

<sup>47</sup>Ratti, Oscar, and Westbrook, Adele, Secrets of the Samurai, (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Comp., 1973) pp. 62-72.

#### D. UNIFICATION

The Ashikaga period (1333-1573), largely characterized by civil unrest and dissolution, served to prepare Japan for the period of strict, hierarchical, feudal rule that lay ahead of it, but first the country had to be unified. The burden of this task fell upon the shoulders of three men who changed Japanese history through the power of the sword.

Oda Nobunaga, at the turning point of his life, was the ruler three provinces around the modern town of Nagoya, east of Kyoto. Beginning with one province bequeathed to him by his father, he captured the others in minor skirmishes early in his career. In 1568 AD, on the pretext of supporting a rival candidate in a succession dispute for the Ashikaga Shogunate, Oda invaded and captured Kyoto. The new Ashikaga Shogun, was soon displaced from power. In twelve years, after defeating the militant monasteries in the central region of Japan, Oda Nobunaga consolidated his control over central Japan. Assassinated in 1582 by a treacherous vassal, his dream of attaining complete dominance over Japan unfulfilled, Nobunaga left an heir, a five year old grandson, under the protection of a four-man council, composed of his most trusted assistants.<sup>48</sup>

Hideyoshi, a commoner who did not even have a surname, had risen through the ranks to become Oda's ablest general. Soon after the death of his leader, Hideyoshi displaced Oda's heir by coopting the other members of the protective council. Hideyoshi, however, honored Oda's memory by continuing his dream of unifying Japan under central rule. This was accomplished through successive campaigns to the southwest, where in 1587 the Shimazu realm was defeated, and the north, where in 1590 the Hojo family in the Kanto surrendered. Soon, all the remaining daimyo, awed by Hideyoshi's success, flocked to his standard, completing the

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<sup>48</sup>Fairbank and Reischauer, pp. 584-585.

political unification of Japan.<sup>49</sup>

Hideyoshi established his capital at Osaka where he built a great castle, and established a system of government based upon feudal vassalage. Major tasks undertaken during his rule included an attempt to curb the destabilizing Christian influence, which had arrived with Portuguese explorers in 1549, and the invasion of Korea in 1592 and again in 1597.<sup>50</sup> These invasions were the result of Hideyoshi's ambitious desire for further conquest (he had plans for moving the Japanese Imperial court to Peking after he had conquered China),<sup>51</sup> and his recognition of the need to keep his large, armed, military force occupied while he cemented his power base in Japan. Both invasions failed, and, in 1598, Hideyoshi died leaving another five year old heir (his son) under the protection of another council of regents.<sup>52</sup>

Hideyoshi's bid to establish his descendants as the de facto rulers of Japan suffered the same fate as Oda's. In 1600 Tokugawa Ieyasu, a confident and ally of Oda Nobunaga and a member of Hideyoshi's council of regents, defeated rival daimyo in the Battle of Sekigahara, and seized control of the country. In 1603 the Emperor "invited" Tokugawa Ieyasu to assume the Shogun title that had adorned the Minamoto and Ashikaga Houses earlier in Japan's history. Immediately concerned with insuring the short term survival of his regime, Tokugawa established his capital far from the court in Edo, and strenuously restricted contact with the court to avoid the intrigues of the Kyoto court which had brought down previous Shogunates. Recognizing that the

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<sup>49</sup>Duus, pp. 88-89.

<sup>50</sup>Boxer, C. R., The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951) p. 45-47.

<sup>51</sup>Murdoch, p. 305.

<sup>52</sup>Han, Woo-keun, The History of Korea, trans. Lee, Kyung-shik, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974) pp. 269-274.

failure of the Nobunaga and Hideyoshi governments to continue themselves lay in the succession of weak leaders, unable to defend themselves, Ieyasu resigned the Shogunate in 1605 in favor of his steady and reliable third son Hidetada. Ieyasu gave up the title, but not the power, continuing to rule in fact from his castle at Sumpu while his son carried out the visible duties of the Shogun in the new military capital at Edo.<sup>53</sup>

Hideyoshi's young son Hideyori, whose safety in Osaka castle had been guaranteed in the Sekigahara surrender agreement, continued to be a threat to the Tokugawa government as a potential rallying point for opponents. In 1614, after careful preparation, the young heir was maneuvered into declaring war upon the Tokugawa. Such was the degree of Tokugawa's preparation that not one major daimyo came to Hideyori's aid. In 1615 Osaka castle fell, insuring the short term survival of the Tokugawa regime.<sup>54</sup>

The longevity of the Tokugawa Shogunate, which lasted from 1600 to 1867, can be attributed to the care taken in establishing a stable social-political structure based upon the power of the Shogun as the "servant" of the Emperor. Ieyasu realized early that the position of a non productive warrior class atop the social hierarchy must be justified philosophically to the people. Buddhism, with its emphasis on ritual, and art was largely regarded with disdain by the military class and the increasingly sophisticated townspeople. Instead, the philosophical foundation for the Tokugawa period would come from the rationalism of Confucian thought.

Confucianism's focus on the creation and maintenance of social order based on an ethical fit Tokugawa's needs.

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<sup>53</sup>Hall, John Whitney, "The *bakuban* system," The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. IV, Hall, J. W., Edt., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp. 145-146.

<sup>54</sup>Sansom, Sir George B., A History of Japan, 1334-1615, (Stanford: Stanford University press, 1961) pp. 396-398.

Confucian ideas of hierarchy justified the rigid social cleavage that characterized Japanese society in the seventeenth century. Ieyasu formalized this structure in his edict, Laws of the Military Houses, delineating a society headed up by an Emperor, protected by a Samurai class, which included the members of the central government, the subordinate daimyo, and all of their armed retainers, supported by a peasant class, regarded as the primary producers, a artisan class, with their craft making abilities, and, finally, a merchant class, whose usefulness to society was in question.<sup>55</sup>

The structure of the Tokugawa Shogunate had at its heart the House council of the Tokugawa family, but grew to reflect the bureaucratic government ideal of Confucian teaching. The Shogun was advised in his decisions by a group of eight to eleven senior *shimpan* (kinsmen) or *fudai* (friendly daimyo). National administrative matters of a routine nature were considered by the *Roju* (Council of Elders) composed of three to six senior Tokugawa kinsmen. Those administrative offices concerned with services for the Shogun and his retainers were handled by the *Wakadoshiyori* (Council of Junior Elders). Early administrative agencies of the early Tokugawa regime developed into a complex bureaucratic apparatus focused on a policy of maintaining the power and prestige of the military class in Japan, hence insuring the long term survival of the government.<sup>56</sup>

One of the initial actions taken by the government along these lines was to curtail the influence of Western ideas in Japan. Judging Christianity to be a destabilizing element in Japan's social order, Hideyoshi had ordered the missionaries out of Japan, but they returned with the trading ships that frequented the Japanese ports. Upon gaining power, Tokugawa Ieyasu initially reversed

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<sup>55</sup>Fairbank, and Reischauer, pp. 602-604.

<sup>56</sup>Ratti, and Westbrook, pp. 68-69.

Hideyoshi's policy, hoping to increase Japan's wealth through trade with the priest's home countries, but the discovery of a Christian backed plot against the Tokugawa rule in 1606 changed his opinion of the possibility of profitable relations. The Edo government, over the period of eight years, issued a series of anti-Christian edicts, ordering the deportation of foreign missionaries along with prominent Japanese converts. Following Ieyasu's death in 1616, his successors, Hidetada and Iemitsu, moved vigorously to restrict European trade to one port, Nagasaki, in an attempt to stem their growing influence. A revolt near Nagasaki in 1637 of Japanese Christians against the harsh restrictions of the Tokugawa government led to the massacre of 20,000 Japanese and the expulsion of all Spanish and Portuguese from Japan. By 1641 all trade was limited to the island of Deshima, in Nagasaki harbor, where only Dutch merchants were allowed to land.<sup>57</sup> An edict issued after the Christian revolt forbid all Japanese citizens to travel abroad on the pain of death. Japan entered a period of nearly complete isolation from the rest of the world.

The culture that developed during this period of isolation was largely governed by the five relationships of Confucianism, and by the Confucian concept of social virtue. Through comparison it becomes apparent that the idealized virtues of Japan are distinct from those honored in China. Whereas in China the sedate virtues of benevolence, justice, ceremony, knowledge, and faith were extolled, the more militant Japanese chose to honor loyalty, ceremony, bravery, faith and frugality as the ideals of their society. The ethical standards derived from these virtues were distinct from the ethics of China. In feudal Japan loyalty to a superior, and to the social unit took clear priority over loyalty to one's family. Confucian morality, within the hierarchical system of Japan, demanded a greater emphasis

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<sup>57</sup>Boxer, pp. 315, 330-331, 377-389.

upon conformity, and, as a result, created a greater social pressure upon the individual. Individuals came to be governed by the concepts of *giri* (duty) and *on* (a debt of gratitude to a superior for his benevolence), developing a strong sense of discipline which was essential if the individual was to fulfill his often sacrificial role in the increasingly martial society. Lacking the Western concept of guilt from sin, the Japanese sense of duty to his "unit," as expressed within the feudal hierarchy, provided the controlling element of shame, should that duty go unfulfilled.<sup>58</sup>

Many factors aided the spread of these concepts. The decision to isolate Japan allowed the Japanese culture to develop in what modern historians have termed a "hothouse" free of competing ideas. The increased study of history by scholars, an essential part of Confucian thought, began to rediscover the ancient role of the Emperors, both as the actual rulers of Japan and as the divinely descended heads of the Shinto cult. Hayashi Razon, the Confucian advisor to Tokugawa Ieyasu, wrote the General History Of Our State, which focused in part on the divine origins of the Japanese Imperial family, the Japanese islands, and the Japanese people as expressed in the Shinto myths.<sup>59</sup> The works of Hayashi and other writers served to reinvigorate the feelings of uniqueness among the Japanese people. Already in isolation, the concept of the Japanese as a chosen people, descended from gods, living on islands created by the gods, served to create and justify an isolationist, ethnocentric viewpoint of the world.<sup>60</sup>

The establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate in the 17th

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<sup>58</sup>Totman, Conrad, "Tokugawa Japan," An Introduction to Japanese Civilization, Tiedemann, Arthur E., Edt. (London: D.C. Heath and Company, 1974) p. 112.

<sup>59</sup>De Bary, Keene, and Tsunoda, pp. 217-218.

<sup>60</sup>Hane, pp. 195-197.

century marked 1000 years of political and cultural development in Japan. Superficially, Japanese society strongly resembled other contemporary societies. They possessed cities, states, and a central government that resembled many Western nations. They held notions of law, freedom, and liberty. They valued the family, tradition, and order like other property based societies, but when one examined the status of the individual in society, Japan and the West began to part ways.

In the development of the Western nation-state, the individual emerged as the base unit of society. In Japan the forces of history and culture emphasized the importance of the group. Beginning with the uji period, individuals depended upon the other members of their clan for mutual defense against opposing groups. The individual's survival and very identity became intertwined with his group affiliation. The uji culture beget the proto-feudal estates of the Kamakura period where, again, the individual's identity was bound to the estate which supported him. The isolation of the Tokugawa period strengthened this characteristic with its emphasis upon loyalty to a military superior, further fostering the growth of group identity within a highly regimented social system. Ruling military elites, cultural descendants of the warring uji clan chiefs, established order, and provided the stabilizing backbone of the developing state. Cultural acceptance of military rule was such that when one daimyo died, many followers, whose whole existence had been linked to his destiny, chose to follow him in death rather than continue in this life.<sup>61</sup> The most celebrated example of this cultural trait is the tale of the Forty Seven Ronin.

Ronin were displaced or discredited samurai who lacked the patronage of a lord. In the case of the Forty Seven

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<sup>61</sup>Tesshi, Furukawa, "The Individual in Japanese Ethics," The Japanese Mind, Moore, Charles A., Edt. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Comp., 1967) p. 228-232.

Ronin, their liege lord had been forced to commit ceremonial suicide after he had wounded an official of the Shogunate who had been taunting him. His loyal subordinates fostered a plan to take revenge upon the official. Faking drunkenness to disguise their intentions, they executed a night raid upon the official's compound. Taking the head of their target, they surrendered to the local magistrates, who, with great honor, allowed them to take their own lives.<sup>62</sup>

Japanese culture also placed emphasis on hierarchical relationships within society. From the time of the Shinto hierarchy of *kami* that emerged from uji competition, the Japanese possessed a well-defined sense of hierarchy. The impact of Chinese borrowing upon the Shotoku Constitution served to encourage the growth of this principle. Tokugawa Ieyasu's, Laws of Military Houses, strictly applied during the isolation period, cemented hierarchy into Japanese behavioral patterns. Every individual's place within the family, the village, the army, and the state was set and reenforced on a daily basis as a means of maintaining order, discipline, and political stability.<sup>63</sup>

The final characteristic of Japan's feudal society was its exclusivity. Indoctrinated from birth with the tenets of Shinto which describe the Japanese as a chosen people, the average citizen of Japan looked out upon the world in us-them terms. Driven by fear, or arrogance, Japan made a conscious decision in the seventeenth century to reject the influences of the West and embrace their own unique, "special" culture. The long isolation of the Tokugawa period and the subsequent expansion of the nationalist-Confucian philosophy encouraged the growth of this

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<sup>62</sup>Turnball, Stephen Samurai Warlords (New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 1989) p. 143.

<sup>63</sup>Hajime, Nakamura, "Legal, Political, and Economic Thought," The Japanese Mind, Moore, Charles A., Edt. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Comp., 1967) pp. 145-148.

ethnocentric view by casting the rest of the world in threatening terms.<sup>64</sup>

These characteristics, all products of Japan's history, provide the foundations for the government of Tokugawa Ieyasu and his descendants. These same characteristics survived Japan's later transition from a feudal society to a modern society, and contributed to the rise of militarism in Japan during the nineteen thirties and forties. Within the hot house of isolation, the cherry tree of militarism grew and matured. With the warm winds of spring, the tree bursts forth in blossom.

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<sup>64</sup>Shunzo, Sakamaki, "Shinto: Japanese Ethnocentrism," The Japanese Mind, Moore, Charles A., Edt. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Comp., 1967) pp. 28-29.

#### CHAPTER IV. PRELUDE TO MILITARISM

Today in flower,  
Tomorrow scattered by the wind-  
Such is our blossom life.  
How can we think its fragrance lasts forever?<sup>65</sup>

##### A. INTERNAL REVOLUTION

That the Tokugawa Shogunate survived for over two hundred years was due to the vision and foresight of its founder, Tokugawa Ieyasu in creating a social system which acted to preserve the status quo of the early seventeenth century, and curtailed contact with the outside world, negating those influences which might threaten his power and influence in Japan. Daimyo who had supported Tokugawa during his rise to power (collectively known as the *fudai*) received the rich and prosperous provinces surrounding the military capital at Edo, shielding the capital from possible attack. Those daimyo who had opposed Tokugawa (known as the *tozama* or "outside" lords), were relegated to fiefs in the periphery of the Japanese islands, far from the military center at Edo, and from the Imperial court at Kyoto.<sup>66</sup>

Time, as in most cases, corrupted those in power. The bakufu administration, expanding by leaps and bounds, created new bureaucratic agencies with each passing year. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the Shogunate faced a series of major crisis.<sup>67</sup> Samurai, occupied with administrative duties, ceremonies, and rising personal debt, became increasingly unable to carry out their prime duty, maintaining order within the country.<sup>68</sup> However, the

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<sup>65</sup>Inoguchi Rikihei, and Nakajima Tadashi The Divine Wind, trans. Pineau, Roger (Annapolis, 1958) p. 187.

<sup>66</sup>Norman, E. H., Origins of the Modern Japanese State, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975) pp. 120-121.

<sup>67</sup>Roberts, John G., Mitsui, (New York: Weatherhill Press, 1973) pp. 23-35.

<sup>68</sup>Beasley, W.G., The Modern History of Japan, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1963) p. 21.

inherent stability of the Tokugawa system of government probably would have allowed it to survive for perhaps another hundred years had it not been for the pressures of Western influence.

The West had first arrived in Japan during the sixteenth century with the Portuguese traders, but were expelled from the islands by the early Tokugawa Shoguns. Trade with the Dutch (restricted to a tiny island depot in Nagasaki harbor), China and Korea continued, providing Japan with news of the slow European expansion to their north (the Russians in Siberia), and to the south (the English in China).<sup>69</sup> Russia had made an unsuccessful attempt to open Japan in the early eighteen hundreds, but it was the news of the British victory in the Sino-British Opium War (1839) that alerted the leaders of Japan to the military potential of the West.<sup>70</sup> Many within the Imperial court, and at the military headquarters at Edo found it incomprehensible that the great state of China could be brought so low by "barbarians."

At first the warrior-class were unable to fathom the nature of their predicament. Few recognized that two hundred and fifty years of isolation had left them far behind the West in the development of weapons and tactics. Shinto beliefs, and the warrior's code provided an initial false bravado to their plans. As one bushido knight wrote,

The strong point of the nation of the gods  
[Japan] is the sword and the spear; even though  
the barbarians may have warships and guns,  
nevertheless we still hold these fellows in our  
grasp.<sup>71</sup>

A combination of the supernatural power that had summoned the kamikaze winds against the Mongol invaders in the

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<sup>69</sup>Norman, pp. 136-138.

<sup>70</sup>McDougall, Walter, Let The Sea Make A Noise, (New York: Basic Books, 1993) p. 271.

<sup>71</sup>Hani Goro, Meiji Ishin, (Tokyo, Iwanami, 1905) p. 65.

thirteenth century, and the strength of the *Bushido* (way of the warrior) code would spare the Japanese islands, the home of the gods, from harm.

The appearance in July of 1853 of Commodore Matthew Perry's steamships, moving "without regard to wind and tide," provoked "astonishment and consternation"<sup>72</sup> among the bakufu officials. Perry, playing his stronger hand, delivered a letter from the American President addressed to the Emperor requesting, among other things, open ports, coaling stations, and humane treatment for shipwrecked sailors in Japan.<sup>73</sup> Stating that he would return in one year, Perry departed, leaving a not so subtle threat that he expected an affirmative reply to his nation's requests.

Edo faced two equally grim options; refusal of Perry's requests risked immediate, humiliating military defeat while acceptance of limited contact with the West (while simultaneously "Westernizing" the military to meet the threat) left the Shogunate open to attack from domestic forces.<sup>74</sup> When Perry returned (strategically early in an attempt to catch the Japanese off-guard) the bakufu reluctantly announced that they would recognize the rights of shipwrecked American sailors, that two ports would be open to American ships, and that coal would be made available. Trade negotiations were delayed pending the appointment of an American consul to Japan.

Perry's opening of Japan began to unravel the feudal fabric that had bound the nation together as the Shogunate's past actions came back to haunt them. For centuries the Edo military government had legitimized its rule by presenting

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<sup>72</sup>Wiley, Peter B., Yankees in the Land of Gods, (New York: Viking, 1990) p. 79.

<sup>73</sup>Senate Executive Documents, No. 34, 33rd Congress, 2nd Session, No. 751, pp. 4-9.

<sup>74</sup>Borton, Hugh, Japan's Modern Century, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1955) pp. 39-45.

itself as the protectors of the Imperial institution and its extended manifestation, the Japanese nation, but Edo's weak response to Perry's demands proved that the "barbarian-subduing-generalissimo" was unable to subdue the barbarians. The Emperor, and the nation were in danger. The forces which had been relegated to outlying areas, or second tier social status began to agitate against Edo, rallying their supporters around the "endangered" Imperial institution. Edo's momentary instability in the wake of Perry's arrival presented an opening to the clans which had previously been blocked from influence to step forward and publicly condemn the Edo government.<sup>75</sup> For more than a generation the Mito clan had agitated for a return to direct Imperial rule. After the appearance of Perry's squadron they increased their rhetoric ten-fold, creating the popular slogan *son-no Jo-i* (revere the Emperor--expel the barbarians).<sup>76</sup> In the summer months of 1866 the armies of the *tozama* clans Choshu, Satsuma, Tosa, and Mito met a much larger Tokugawa army and battled them to a standstill. In a first look of things to come, the rebels swallowed their pride, purchased a shipment of rifles from British traders, and proceeded into battle carrying both swords and modern weaponry.<sup>77</sup>

The failure of the Shogunate to defeat the rebellious forces, even when they had a preponderance of forces, accelerated the erosion of their popular support. One year later the rebel forces captured Kyoto and the young, newly enthroned Emperor Mutsuhito. On September 3, 1867, the last Tokugawa Shogun, Tokugawa Keiki, abdicated his office, ceding defacto rule of the nation to the Emperor, and ending

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<sup>75</sup>Harries, Meirion and Susie, Soldiers of the Sun, (New York: Ransom House, 1991) pp. 7-9.

<sup>76</sup>Ukita Kazatami, Fifty Years of New Japan, Vol. I, (London: Huish Publishing, 1910) p. 143.

<sup>77</sup>Hall, John W., Japan, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1970) p. 262.

the nearly eight hundred years of military rule in Japan that had begun with Minamoto Yoritomo in 1185. Four months later, after transferring the Imperial capital from Kyoto to the impressive castle-palace of the Tokugawa's in Edo (renamed Tokyo or Eastern Capital), the Emperor, assisted by his young champions, announced the restoration of the ancient form of direct Imperial government.<sup>78</sup>

At the time of his "restoration," the Meiji Emperor (Meiji or "Enlightened Rule" was chosen as the Reign name for the Emperor) was sixteen years old. Neither he, nor his court possessed the experience necessary to govern the nation, and so real power in the opening days of the restoration remained with the former tozama clan samurai who had led the revolt against the Tokugawa. Revolutionaries against the tyranny of Tokugawa rule, following the restoration these young men adjusted their focus to the new problems at hand, and became successful innovators of national policy. In the early days of the Meiji government, the new Imperial advisors sat in council, offering the Emperor their unanimous recommendations. However, the young samurai advisors to the Emperor represented more than a simple shift of power from one feudal alliance to another, they were, in fact, a revolutionary movement acting to protect the Emperor and the nation from the threats posed by the West.

Proximity to power brought to these young warriors an awareness of the true magnitude of the West's power and technological advancement. Privately realizing that their revolutionary promise to "expel the barbarians" was unrealistic, the new leaders simply forgot it, and shifted their focus to ensuring the long term survivability of the government. In a move that had many parallels with the period of early Chinese borrowing, the Meiji leaders made an

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<sup>78</sup>Ito Hirobumi, Commentaries on the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, translated by Ito Miyoji (Tokyo, 1906) pp. i-iii, 38-68.

early fundamental decision to adapt certain features of the West to Japanese culture as a means of preserving the Japaneseness of that culture. In April, 1868 the Imperial government, in an attempt to both quiet popular unrest, and to chart a strategic course, promulgated the Five Article Oath (also known as the Charter Oath) under the Imperial seal. This pact promised the creation of deliberative assemblies, the freedom of the people to pursue their own interests, and, perhaps most importantly, that knowledge from the outside world would be sought in order to strengthen the Emperor's government.<sup>79</sup>

Initial attempts at creating an effective government were at best clumsy and ineffective. The continuing influence of daimyo and samurai representatives blocked any initiatives which challenged existing feudal structures. In March, 1869 the young Satsuma and Choshu members of the Meiji government, in a move to assert Imperial control over the 260 feudal domains, convinced the heads of their own clans to return control of their domains to the Emperor. The strength of the Imperial institution, due to the Shinto belief system, forced the leaders of other clans to follow suit or risk charges of disloyalty and disrespect to the Emperor. Within six months all daimyo followed the Satsuma and Choshu example. Initially kept in place as Imperial governors, these daimyo were soon lured from their positions by inducements of large pensions, and court peerage. By the summer of 1871 the provincial system was replaced by a newly organized prefectual system which cut across centuries old geographical boundaries, and clan loyalties.<sup>80</sup>

Food shortages, rapid inflation, and the influence of foreign trade all acted to destabilize the social structure

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<sup>79</sup>Quigley, Harold S., Japanese Government and Politics, (New York: The Century Company, 1932) p. 333.

<sup>80</sup>Umegaki, Michio, After the Restoration, (New York: New York University Press, 1988) pp. 6-8.

of early Meiji Japan, and the Satsuma-Choshu (Sat-Cho) clique's attack upon the existing feudal power structure did little to ease the unrest. To counter the growing strife a new ten thousand man army was created in 1871. Composed of samurai volunteers from the Satsuma, Choshu and Tosa clans, the new army was outfitted with Western uniforms, weapons and trained in the latest Western tactics. Proud products of hundreds of years on top of the Japanese social ladder, the members of the new army were suspicious, and distrustful of the new "barbarian" tactics. This resistance to Western military concepts led the Meiji government to the realization that, while the new army was sufficient for the task of maintaining stability in the early days of reform, it would not be the instrument of national greatness. Instead Japan would raise a Western-style, conscription army.

The conscription army (and many of the later reforms to that army) was the product of Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922). A young Choshu samurai who had played minor roles in the Restoration war, Yamagata would eventually become one of the most influential men in the emerging Japanese Government. Intensely interested in Western military tactics, techniques, and policies, Yamagata toured Europe in 1870, carefully noting the qualities and characteristics of the European armies.<sup>81</sup> Upon his return to Japan, he wrote a memorial to the Emperor detailing his observations and recommendations. On January 10, 1873 the Emperor, acting upon Yamagata's memorial, issued an Imperial Mandate Concerning Conscription which required all Japanese men (regardless of their social status) to serve three years of active service in the nation's military to be followed by four years in the reserve.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Hackett, Roger F., Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971) pp. 51-54.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. pp. 59-66.

The universalization of military service began to erode the dominating position of the samurai class in Japanese society. This process received a boost in early 1876 when the government outlawed the wearing of swords in public. Later that same year the government discontinued the samurai's stipends, compensating them with large governmental bonds to use as they saw fit. Some of these fading warriors parlayed their bonds into huge fortunes while others quickly squandered their money, descending into a quagmire of bitterness, debauchery, and self-pity. Many of these disgruntled ex-warriors began to agitate for a return to the "golden" days of military rule. In 1877 a band of young, aspiring shoguns attacked a company of government troops sent to remove a cache of government arms from the troubled south-western region of Japan. It was the beginning of the end for the samurai, a revolt led by a most reluctant leader.

Saigo Takamori was, in life and death, revered by both his enemies and his friends as a warrior god. At age 27 he was a minor official in the Satsuma clan government. By age 45 he had become a leading figure of the new government, a counsellor to the Emperor, the commander in chief of the Imperial guards, and a marshal of the Japanese Army.<sup>83</sup> In 1873 Saigo, who had remained behind while many of the Meiji leaders participated in a fact-finding tour of European capitals, responded angrily to the Korean Court's refusal to recognize the new Japanese regime. True to his samurai beliefs, he advocated an invasion of the peninsular nation to extract retribution for the insult done to his Emperor's government. The touring Meiji leaders, increasingly aware that turmoil would only invite further European interest in Japan, hurried home to rein in the great warrior. Saigo, perceiving his honor sullied by politicians, resigned in disgust, and returned to his home in the south-western

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<sup>83</sup>Morris, p. 248.

region of Japan where he founded schools for the purpose of educating the region's youth in the philosophies of the warrior. It was these students that launched the attack against the Imperial forces in the area.

When informed later of the attack, Saigo bowed to his destiny and accepted the leadership of the rebellion. It was to be the last stand of the samurai against the tides of change. In 1877 a conscription army of 43,000 defeated Saigo's force of 18,000 in a series of battles throughout the Satsuma and Choshu provinces. In September Saigo, wounded and unable to carry on, committed ceremonial suicide. He was fifty years of age.<sup>84</sup>

#### **B. IMITATION OF THE WEST**

Admittedly the defeat of the samurai rebels in 1877 did seem to indicate that Japan was committed to putting the past, with all of its feudal remnants, behind it in order to assume its place among the modern nations of the world. The calls of *son-no jo-i* had all faded from memory, but Japan had still to formulate a policy capable of reversing the unequal treaties which had been forced upon Japan by the Western powers when they had opened the nation twenty years before. Even before the Restoration in 1868 young Japanese leaders from the Satsuma and Choshu provinces began to travel abroad in an attempt to renegotiate the unequal treaties which had been forced upon Japan by the Western powers in the eighteen-fifties, and to accumulate knowledge of the world. Unable to bring about changes in the treaty relationships, the delegations did witness the strengths of Western governments, industry, and military power, and returned to Japan with the intention of empowering the civil, industrial, and military sectors of the nation.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Vlastos, Stephen, "Opposition movements in early Meiji," in The Cambridge History of Japan, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 398-400.

<sup>85</sup>Roberts, pp. 96-99.

Establishing the motto *fukoku kyohei* (enrich the nation, strengthen the country), they set out to meet the world head on.

The largest challenge facing the young government was modernizing Japan's economic base. After abolishing the feudal provinces, the government moved to establish a standard national currency, replacing the rice based monetary system of the Tokugawa era. Utilizing profits from silk export along with some creative financing, the Japanese government invested heavily in the construction of railroads, and telegraph networks to link the nation's economic centers. Coal deposits fueled foreign steamships and burgeoning Japanese power plants. Cheap labor and new technology brought in from America stimulated textile production and export. In keeping with the goal of strengthening the nation, the government invested heavily in the production of munitions, and ships. By 1882 the government reported that it owned and operated no less than three shipyards, fifty-two factories, ten mines, and five munitions works; all built without incurring significant debt to foreign concerns.<sup>86</sup> Japan was well on its way to achieving economic modernity.

The Meiji constitution of 1889 emerged from a social tug of war between popular forces who desired democratic freedoms and the leaders of the Meiji government bent on increasing the ability of the central government to meet the growing external and internal challenges to the nation. In 1873 a popular Freedom and People's Rights movement arose in the outlying areas to demand that the government move to establish the working national assemblies that had been promised by the Emperor and his councilors in the Charter Oath. Contact with the West fueled the fires of unrest as intellectuals within Japan acquired knowledge of the British and American democratic systems of government. This

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<sup>86</sup>Borton, pp. 154-156.

knowledge only increased the level of agitation over the government's inability to reverse the unequal treaty rights granted to the West. Within six years the Freedom and People's Rights movement migrated from the countryside into the cities, and had a particularly powerful following in the capital city of Tokyo. The Satsuma and Choshu leaders in the Meiji government increasingly became the targets of popular unrest.<sup>87</sup>

By 1880 these former samurai had been in power for twelve years, and had no desire to leave soon. Their original revolutionary fervor and loyalty to the Emperor had dissipated. In its place grew a sense of self-importance and a self-justifying responsibility to the good of the nation. The nation would be best served, they thought, through their continued rule, and so they acted to block "destabilizing" democratic movements. However, the Emperor, responding to the growing unrest, had announced that the nation would have a constitution by the end of the decade. The challenge to the "Oligarchy," as they were known in the popular press, was to carry out the Emperor's wishes while still retaining the power they had come to enjoy.<sup>88</sup>

It fell to a young councillor, Ito Hirobumi to formulate the Oligarchy's response to the Emperor's challenge. In a one year tour of the Western capitals, Ito collected information about the constitutions and governments of Western nations. He rejected the American and British models as being too liberal for Japan's (i.e. the Oligarchy's) needs, and chose instead the Prussia model with its powerful monarchy and strong central government.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Duus, Peter, Party Rivalry and Political Change in Taisho Japan, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968) pp. 7-11.

<sup>88</sup>Nobutaka, Ike, Beginnings of Political Democracy in Japan, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969) pp. 171-180, 188-191.

<sup>89</sup>Siemes, Johannes, Herman Roesler and the Making of the Meiji State, (Tokyo: Sophia University press, 1966) p. 32.

In the years that followed his return to Japan, he and the other members of the Oligarchy debated the exact wording and structure of the constitution and government. They, as a group, established a pattern that would be followed throughout the rest of the pre-World War Two period. For every new freedom granted to the people, they crafted a well hidden restriction.

In 1885, in preparation for the parliamentary government that would follow, the Oligarchs sought and received from the Emperor authorization for the formation of an executive cabinet, which was staffed entirely by members of the Sat-Cho clique, to be directly responsible to the Emperor for the execution of his laws.<sup>90</sup> Inherently distrusting the popular wishes of the people, the Oligarchs created a constitution which granted to the executive branch the power to check the wishes of both the legislature and the judiciary, but did not grant reciprocating balancing powers against the executive. Later the Emperor authorized (on the advice of his Sat-Cho councilors) the formation of a Privy Council which would have the function of advising the Emperor on political matters and recommending Prime Ministers of the Cabinet.<sup>91</sup>

As the Meiji era came to its close, a new institution arose to preserve the primacy of the Oligarchs. The elite Oligarchs who had occupied the Premier's seat on multiple occasions became known as the *Genro* (elders). Upon ending their careers as cabinet Ministers, these original members of the Restoration were "requested" (actually they themselves drafted the requests) by the Emperor to "hold themselves ready" to assist him as he saw fit. This informal council of elder statesmen existed outside of the constitutional structure and yet were instrumental in the initiation and cessation of wars, and the formation of

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<sup>90</sup>Ito, p. 99.

<sup>91</sup>Beasley, pp. 129-130.

cabinets. No longer young enough to hold power themselves, they ruled vicariously through young proteges who filled their former positions in the cabinet.<sup>92</sup> Hence, as the government developed its outwardly Western appearance, it continued the traditions that reached back to the days of Kamakura. Power resided not in the public officeholder familiar to the Western observer, but in the kingmakers behind the curtain. It would be the influence of a kingmaker that would bring militarism in Japan to its fruition.

Marshal Yamagata Aritomo, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Prime Minister of the Imperial Cabinet, President of the Privy Council, and *Genro* became one of the greatest kingmakers in modern Japanese history. A man of progressive and stalwart conservative tendencies, Yamagata desired a place for his nation among the great powers of the world while he simultaneously worried about his people losing their "old ways."<sup>93</sup> Foreign threats, domestic political uprisings and internal mutinies during the eighteen seventies had planted within Yamagata an aspiration to create a powerful army and a place for it in the Japanese government that was both independent of political movements, and political control. The only institution that approached this state of independence was the Emperor, and Yamagata consistently sought to identify the military in Japan with the ancient Imperial institution.

The Emperor's Imperial Mandate Concerning Conscription, requiring each male citizen to serve in the military, served as an important opening step, but even this move was eclipsed by the establishment of a centrally controlled national education system in 1871. Organized along hierarchical lines, with the responsibility for curriculum

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<sup>92</sup>Hackett, pp. 212-213.

<sup>93</sup> Pittau, Joseph, Political Thought in Early Meiji Japan, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967) pp. 77-79.

choices resting ultimately with a Minister of Education in Tokyo, the schools served as the frontline of the government's battle to create a stronger Japan. Designed by the Oligarchy, the national curriculum went beyond standard language, literacy, and mathematical subjects to promote the nationalistic Shinto myths as accepted truths. Exalted to express their loyalty to the Emperor (and his government) in every facet of their lives, the youth of Japan were mentally prepared for military service well in advance of their induction dates.<sup>94</sup>

Yamagata, realizing that sheer numbers would not offset the West's military advantages, pushed additional reforms through the government. In 1875 he established the first Japanese military academy, modeled after the British and Prussian academies, to train and provide additional education for the officers who would lead Japan's new army. Later, in 1878, Yamagata succeeded in establishing a Prussian-style General Staff to oversee and coordinate administrative and command functions for the growing Japanese army. This command structure drew its legitimacy from the Emperor, and the Emperor's 1882 Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors (ghostwritten by Yamagata) commanded all to recognize that, "We are your supreme Commander-in-Chief." Further ordering Japan's soldiers and sailors to be loyal to the state, respectful of seniors, valorous, faithful, and righteous, the Rescript promised that, if they faithfully carried out their duties, "the might and dignity of Our Empire will shine in the world." The rescript's statement that the Emperor must, "always remain the supreme civil and military power" served to remind the other branches of government of the traditional duality between the civil government and the military government that had

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<sup>94</sup>Passin, H., Society and Education in Japan, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965) pp. 154-157. For full text of Education Rescript, see Appendix A.

existed in Japan since ancient times.<sup>95</sup>

Yamagata's choice of Prussian structures represented a change in Japan's civil-military direction. In the days following the Restoration in 1868 the new Japanese government had relied upon the French for advice in military matters. A French military mission arrived in Japan in 1872 to train the initial cadre of Japanese officers for the new Imperial army. They remained to serve as instructors at the new military academies and as advisors to the Imperial government, but news of France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war damaged the mission's prestige and led to their dismissal in 1880. Within a few short years a Prussian officer, Major Jacob Meckel, arrived in Japan to instruct and advise the new army on the use of the new weapons being produced in Japanese factories.

In 1885, during the formulation process of the Constitution, Yamagata gained acceptance for his view that the military must be answerable only to the Emperor, and thus independent of civil control. Later the independent nature of the military would bring cabinets crashing down as War and Navy Ministers, chosen exclusively from the lists of three and four star generals and admirals, tendered their letters of resignation. If no other qualified officers would serve, the remainder of the cabinet had no choice but to resign in mass.

On February 11, (Empire Day, the day when the mythical first Emperor Jimmu ascended the throne) 1889 the Emperor Meiji promulgated the new Constitution. In the first and third Articles announced that the "Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal" and that these Emperors were and are "sacred and inviolable." The constitution made it very clear that government in Japan drew its power from a divine Emperor.

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<sup>95</sup>Lory, Hillis, Japan's Military Masters, (New York: The Viking Press, 1943) pp. 239-245. For full text of the Soldiers and Sailors Rescript, see Appendix B.

The constitution itself was presented as a "gift" from the Emperor to his people.<sup>96</sup>

In the twenty-one years that followed the restoration of Imperial power the nation had progressed industrially, militarily, and constitutionally, but the unequal treaties remained along with other remnants of earlier times. The "Oligarchy's" view of the world was still largely colored by the bushido values, and military ethos that had influenced Japanese society for eight hundred years. While these leaders, in dress and mannerisms, increasingly resembled their Western counterparts, internally they remained samurai; sworn to defend the honor and interests of their nation and Emperor. The imperial competition between nations for colonies, resources and wealth was interpreted as an extension of the conflict between individual warriors. If the West failed to recognize Japan's great attributes, then the nation had no choice but to enter the competition and claim their rightful place among the nations of the world.

### **C. IMPERIAL ASPIRATIONS**

Yamagata Aritomo, in a speech to the Diet (Japan's new parliamentary assembly) on December 6, 1890, suggested Japan defend not only its line of sovereignty, which encompassed the nation's territorial possessions, but also its economic, diplomatic, and military interests in those areas surrounding the home islands which he termed the nation's "line of advantage."<sup>97</sup> In the years that followed, serving alternately as Chief of the General Staff, Home Minister, and Prime Minister, Yamagata extended his earlier remarks to advance the expansion of the nation's military power as the

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<sup>96</sup>Quigley, pp. 335-336.

<sup>97</sup>Hackett, pp. 138-139.

path to equality with Japan's Western counterparts.<sup>98</sup> His unrelenting negotiations with colleagues garnered a military appropriation representing one third of the national budget in the early years of the Meiji government, but now Yamagata argued that this level of commitment only served to raise Japan to the level of a third or second rate power.<sup>99</sup> Equality with the Western powers, and subsequent reversal of Japan's treaty status (the major issue of the day), could only be accomplished through embracing an offensive strategy for the nation's military forces.

In the nineteenth century European states articulated a doctrine of national power based upon colonial position, resources, and markets.<sup>100</sup> For years Yamagata observed as the foreign powers carve up the formerly great "Middle Kingdom" of China, but was hesitant to enter the fray for fear of attracting European animosity while Japan's defenses were weak. In 1890, the year of the "line of advantage" speech, Yamagata, the leader of a relatively strong military force, began to direct his attention towards Korea.

Japan had been instrumental in the opening of Korea to outside trade twenty years after their own "opening" by Commodore Perry, gaining in the process open ports and extra-territorial rights for Japanese citizens in Korea.<sup>101</sup> Initially focused on business, Japan's inexpensive textile goods brought great profits back to the home economy. Rising competition within the Korean government between

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<sup>98</sup>Mayo, Marlene, "Attitudes Toward Asia and the Beginnings of Japanese Empire," in Imperial Japan and Asia--A Reassessment, (New York: East Asian Institute, Columbia University Press, 1967) pp. 9-17.

<sup>99</sup>Borton, pp. 156-157.

<sup>100</sup>Edwards, Michael, Asia in the European Age: 1498-1955, (New York: Praeger, 1962) p. 165.

<sup>101</sup>Iriye, Akira, "Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status," in The Cambridge History of Japan Vol. 5, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 745-746.

factions supporting the traditional Chinese style of government and groups favoring the new dynamic Japanese national modernization led China and Japan to withdraw their forces from the peninsula in 1885, waiting for one faction or the other emerged as the leader. Neither power was militarily prepared to force the issue at that time.<sup>102</sup> China, now in her fading days as an Empire, continued to assert her claims of paramount interests in the peninsula while Yamagata's allies in Japan's military camp pronounced Korea "a dagger poised at the heart" of the nation, and argued that it should be subjugated to the Japanese will, or at least rendered neutral.<sup>103</sup>

Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi, who had negotiated the 1885 agreement to remove forces from Korea, opposed the expansionists' goals, favoring instead continued internal economic expansion. His stand, in direct contradiction to Yamagata, represented a widening gulf between the two men and a growing split in the unity of the Genro.<sup>104</sup> Personal ambition was overtaking the bonds of loyalty that existed between the Satsuma and Choshu clansmen. Now the Ito faction faced the Yamagata faction in a competition for political dominance. It was a fight between the forces of civil government, and the military.

Outside events ultimately decided the competition as public dissatisfaction with the Genro's handling of the unequal treaty dilemma generated new political parties who aspired to wrest control of the government through democratic process. Ito, blocked in the Diet by partisan intransigence, had been forced to dissolve the legislature

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<sup>102</sup>Korea, (Seoul: Hakwon-sa LTD, 1963) p. 76.

<sup>103</sup>Iriye, Akira, Across the Pacific, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967) p. 66.

<sup>104</sup>Oka, Yoshitake, Five Political Leaders of Modern Japan, trans. by Andrew Fraser and Patricia Murray, (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1986) pp. 14-15.

only to witness more opposition emerge from the elections. To circumvent the popular opposition, Ito resorted to the use of Imperial decree to enact his political agenda. In the end the events of the summer of 1894 terminated Ito's opposition to Yamagata's expansionistic ideas, and his need to use Imperial influence to control the government.

The Sino Japanese war of 1894-95 stands as the watershed of modern Japanese history. Before the war the trends of Japanese politics seemed to point to the eventuality of sound constitutional democracy, and Japanese diplomacy was characterized by patience. Following the war the nation's politics would be dominated by the military, and its diplomacy would be exercised at the end of a stick.

In the spring of 1894 a band of Korean rebels, known as the Tonghaks, marched on Seoul calling for a return to the virtues of "Eastern Learning" and decrying the corruption of the West and all of its imitators (specifically the Japanese). Sensing the direction the Korean situation was heading, General Yamagata established a wartime Imperial General Headquarters at the Imperial palace in June. Upon hearing of a Korean request for Chinese assistance, Yamagata, acting within the terms of the 1885 China-Japan agreement, dispatched Japanese troops to the peninsula to protect Japanese nationals.<sup>105</sup> Quickly neutralizing the Tonghaks; Japanese and Chinese troops remained in Korea, eyeing each other with increasing distrust. On July 23, 1894 Japanese troops compelled the Korean King to order all Chinese troops out of the country. Eight days later Korea, and its Japanese "ally" declared war on China.<sup>106</sup>

In Japan all political opposition to the Genro vanished in a wave of nationalistic enthusiasm. The entire

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<sup>105</sup>Han, Woo-Keun, The History of Korea, trans. by Kyung-shik Lee, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1970) p. 410.

<sup>106</sup>Key Treaties for the Great Powers: 1814-1914, Vol. 2, (New York: David and Charles, 1972) p. 670.

government supported the war as a means of establishing a greater Japanese presence on the Asian mainland. State supported Shinto education programs in the Japanese schools, a product of the 1880 Education Rescript, had yielded a generation of citizens convinced of the superiority of their own race, and the divinity of their Emperor. The Sino-Japanese war witnessed the first emergence of a pseudo-missionary complex in the Japanese as they fought to carry their superior system of life to other "barbarian" lands.<sup>107</sup>

The mass support of the war effort aided Yamagata in his decision to establish the military's wartime headquarters at the Imperial palace. There, under the Imperial umbrella, the military effectively isolated itself from any civil interference or control. Domestic policy, diplomatic negotiations, economic allocation, and military strategy all carried the imprint of Yamagata's influence. Issued in the name of the Emperor, the Commander in Chief, wartime orders carried the force of religious doctrine. At war's end, less than a year after the initial declaration, the military had achieved a paramount position in the political process in Japan, effectively altering the course of Japan's constitutionally based, democratic development.<sup>108</sup>

The war itself is remembered almost as an afterthought. Yamagata's well trained troops, utilizing superior armaments and tactics quickly overwhelmed and defeated their Chinese adversaries. The Chinese forces, weakened by internal corruption, crumbled under the onslaught, and spent nearly all of the war in continuous retreat. Ultimately pushed completely off of the Korean peninsula, Chinese troops later lost Port Arthur, the economically rich Liaotung Peninsula,

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<sup>107</sup>Jansen, Marius B., "Japanese Imperialism: Late Meiji Perspective," in The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984) p. 72.

<sup>108</sup>Norman, p. 309.

and the corridor leading into southern Manchuria.<sup>109</sup> The war was a route, and, beyond confirming the precedent of military independence, produced two outcomes, both unplanned, that served to buttress public support for future military actions.

The unequal relationship between Japan and the Western Powers was a constant humiliating reminder of Japan's earlier weakness. The inability of the Meiji Oligarchs to effect a revision of the treaties led to rising public discontent and occasional outbreaks of violence throughout the post-Restoration period, and was the largest factor contributing to the dissenting tenor of political parties in Japan. Even as tensions over the crises in Korea rose during the summer of 1894 the Diet's attention remained fixated upon the question of treaty revision. It was an extraordinary circumstance of history that on July 16, 1894 Japanese Foreign Minister Akoi Shuzo, on a diplomatic mission to London, negotiated the first agreement with a major Western Power abolishing foreign extraterritoriality in Japan.<sup>110</sup> Upon hearing of the long sought breakthrough, the Japanese public associated Britain's recognition of Japan's equal status with the nation's ongoing show of force in Korea. As the war played out over the next year other major Powers followed London's example, further fueling the Japan's subconscious linkage of military might with international prestige.

Following the war Japan's military received another inadvertent boost from the Great Powers of Europe. The surrender Treaty of Shimonoseki, signed by Japan and China on April 17, 1895, obligated China to "recognize definitely the full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea," and further required the "Middle Kingdom" to permanently cede to Japan Formosa, the Pescadores islands, and the

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<sup>109</sup>Harries, pp. 58-60.

<sup>110</sup>Borton, p. 203.

recently captured Liaotung Peninsula. Additionally, China was asked to pay a large indemnity to Japan, to cover the costs of the war.<sup>111</sup> The new wartime acquisitions brought new mineral wealth to Japan, and room for expansion. None of the expansionists in Japan expected any challenge from the West, only increased respect and, perhaps, congratulations for learning the rules of the Imperialist game so quickly. Very soon Japan became aware that it had yet to learn all of the rules of Europolitics.

Russia, a nation which traversed the Eurasian landmass, had committed itself to the construction of a continent spanning railway, and hoped to secure a warm water port in either Korea or the Liaotung Peninsula to serve as the Eastern terminal of the line. The Czar's government had not foreseen the quickness or magnitude of Japan's victory over their Chinese adversaries, but once the victory was evident, Russia (with the support of its German ally) had no choice but to earnestly pursue the reversal of Japan's wartime gains. Within a week of the announcement of the terms of the Shimonoseki Treaty, Russia's diplomats approached other European Powers to ask their assistance in an intervention on China's behalf. Soon thereafter Japan's Foreign Ministry was strongly "advised" by representatives of Russia, France, and Germany that it should renounce its claims to the Liaotung Peninsula, and remove its troops from Korea.<sup>112</sup> Strong enough to fight China, but not strong enough to stand up to three of the greatest Powers in Europe, Japan acquiesced.

Japan's forced compliance with the demands of the three Powers triggered a wave of ethnocentric nationalism throughout the nation. Following the Triple Intervention, Japan's relations with the world around it was tainted by the conviction that a nation's place in the international

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<sup>111</sup>Key Treaties for the Great Powers: 1814-1914, pp. 670-672.

<sup>112</sup>McDougall, pp. 386-387.

community would be determined by the size, strength, and capabilities of its military forces.<sup>113</sup> As one observer stated, "in diplomacy we are always beaten or cheated."<sup>114</sup> In the year following the Sino-Japanese War the Army "secured" permission to nearly double its size, adding six more divisions to the seven already in existence. The Japanese Navy underwent a similar expansion in numbers and capabilities of units. Between 1907 and 1911 the Army added an additional seven units to bring its total to nineteen. It sought continued growth throughout the nineteen-twenties.<sup>115</sup>

As Japan entered the twentieth century, the characteristics that had emerged during the Sino-Japanese War were reenforced by subsequent experiences. Japan's participation in the Boxer Rebellion relief effort (1900), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and in World War I (on the side of the British and their allies) heightened the domestic prestige of the military, brought international respect, new territorial acquisitions, and the economic benefits of Empire. The unpopular outcome of the Portsmouth Treaty negotiations following Japan's surprising victory over Russia in 1905 served to prove the popular Japanese contention that Western diplomacy sought only to whittle away the gains of war paid for in Japanese blood.

#### **D. TAISHO DEMOCRACY**

On July 30, 1912 the Emperor Meiji died. He had come to power as a young boy fifteen years of age, ill prepared to assume the actual control of the nation implied in his Restoration message of January, 1868. As he grew older, and matured he began to take a more active role in government, but this never went beyond casual participation in the

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<sup>113</sup>Jansen, p.72.

<sup>114</sup>Nitobe, Inazo, The Works, (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1972) p. 53.

<sup>115</sup>Beasley, pp. 164-165.

debates of his advisors convened in Imperial Conference, or settling a disagreement between two factions in the Oligarchy. The rapid growth and increasing complexity of the government soon left him relegated to the purely ceremonial functions that had occupied his predecessors. These he performed with skill, improvising along the way as he refashioned the throne into a human and divine institution.<sup>116</sup> He reigned grandly, but he did not rule.

The Meiji Emperor, a dynamic and forceful personality, was succeeded by his son Yoshihito, who took the reign name *Taisho* or Great Rectification; reform. Emperor Taisho, isolated throughout most of his life, overshadowed by his legendary father, physically frail, and mentally unstable during most of his years on the throne was ill-suited for the role of a living god demanded of him by his father's advisors.<sup>117</sup> Instead his personal weakness would be linked in history to the outward decline of the Genro's power, and the rise of democratic party government in Japan.

One of the major factors in the emergence of democracy during the Taisho Era was the rapid expansion of the nation's economy and per capita income. Japan's weak response to the "advise" of the three European powers following the Sino-Japanese War convinced the populace of the importance of the Genro's belief that the nation should strengthen itself militarily and industrially if it was to command the respect of the world. Cash received in the forms of indemnity payments from China (1895) and Russia (1905) served as the initial start-up capital for new copper, electricity, gas, shipbuilding, textile, steel

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<sup>116</sup>Harootunian, H.D., "A Sense of an Ending and the Problem of Taisho," in Japan in Crises-Essays on Taisho Democracy, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974) pp. 6-7.

<sup>117</sup>Young, A. Morgan, Japan in Recent Times-1912-1926, (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1927) p. 176.

making, and canned goods industries.<sup>118</sup> Geographically isolated from the major battle lines of World War I, Japan nonetheless contributed to the war effort by manufacturing war materials for the allied powers. Factory production increased, and the average income for an industrial worker increased significantly drawing thousands of rural farm workers to the city in search of prosperity.<sup>119</sup> Living in the close confines of city blocks, they became politically aware, and party leaders were quick to realize the potential influence of a work force mobilized along political lines.

By the end of the second decade of the century the Power of the Genro was fading. Many of the aging leaders lost the ability or desire to govern, preferring quiet retirement as they entered their final years. Ito Hirobumi, the father of the Japanese constitution, had been killed by a Korean assassin in 1909. Yamagata Aritomo, the old militarist, remained active in government into his eighth decade, but finally surrendered to death in 1922. The demise of the Genro broke the Satsuma and Choshu lock on the national government, momentarily weakening the barriers that had blocked Japan's democratic development.<sup>120</sup>

The party governments that emerged in the nineteen twenties took advantage of the Genro's decline to temporarily rollback the military's influence in government. This process was made possible by amending the original Imperial Ordinance defining the War and Navy Ministerial portfolios to allow Prime Ministers to appoint retired three and four star generals and admirals to the posts.<sup>121</sup> This amendment circumvented the active military's hold on

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<sup>118</sup>Borton, pp. 268-276.

<sup>119</sup>Orchard, John, Japan's Economic Position-The Progress of Industrialization, (New York: McGraw-Hill/Whittlesey House, 1930) pp. 346-358.

<sup>120</sup>Quigley, pp. 104-106.

<sup>121</sup>Lory, p. 120.

government policy, allowing the cabinet to stabilize the growth of the military and to ultimately cut four divisions from the army, the first decline in strength since the modern army's inception.

The liberal campaign to restrain the military extended into the diplomatic arena during the nineteen twenties. In November of 1921 Prime Minister Hara dispatched a delegation to attend the Washington Disarmament Conference over the protests of his War and Navy Ministers. The conference spawned the Naval Disarmament Treaty, which limited Japan's capital ship construction to a 5:5:3 ratio to Great Britain and the United States respectively.<sup>122</sup> The 1930 London Naval Treaty extended the Washington Conference's 5:5:3 shipbuilding ratio for another decade.<sup>123</sup> The Navy Minister, feeling that the new treaty imposed restrictions on the Emperor's sovereign right of command, resigned, but failed to bring the government down. In 1928 the militarists took another psychological blow when their government signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, outlawing aggressive war as an instrument of national policy. The promise of peace was to be a false one. Japan's past would betray its future.

Militarism in Japan during the Meiji Era underwent an evolutionary process that allowed many of the ancient feudal traditions of the nation to survive the wave of modernization that swept through the country in the decades following the Restoration of the Emperor's government to defacto as well as dejure rule. The success of the evolutionary process was due in no small part to the presence of a group of young, pragmatic, samurai in the new government who quickly realized that the best hope for preserving Japan's culture, and independence lay in a plan

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<sup>122</sup>Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949, (Washington: Department of State, 1950) pp. 351-371.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid. pp. 1055-1073.

that honored the nation's past while simultaneously looking towards the future that was evidenced in the practices and technologies of the West.

The pride of the Yamato race, nurtured by the myths of the Shinto religion, drove these Genro to overcome the humiliation of their forced emergence into the modern world. Anxious to surmount the obstacles that had been placed in their path by two hundred and fifty years of isolation, they led their nation into an age of economic expansion and rapid industrialization. Sensitive to Western judgements of backwardness, they adapted Western dress and mannerism into their everyday activities. Cognizant of Western concepts of international competition, these samurai built, in less than four decades, a modern military capable of defeating a Western power in battle. In their hearts, however, they remained what they were: Japanese Samurai.

These leaders, the Genro, brought all of the Western appearances needed to convince the European and American of their equality, but the things that they taught to the Japanese people about international power, might, and position were based in the only social code that they understood; the code of the warrior. Like their ancestors in the age of Shotoku and Chinese borrowing, they accepted the ideas of the outside world, but carefully layered them around the essential seed of the society, preserving what was essentially Japanese. Through the use of Western structures such as national education, a conscription army, and Constitutional government they modernized their nation while simultaneously strengthening their position in the central government by employing popular myths from the past. They filled the role of the village elders for the entire nation, drawing upon traditions that stretched back to the Uji clans of a thousand years before. Only in the deaths of the Genro would Japan experience a temporary age of democracy. But the old samurai of the Meiji Restoration, and the generations of samurai that had come before them,

would have the last laugh, as the power of the warriors code, let loose among the entire populace of Japan, would run rampant over the nation and the world beyond.

## V. THE ARMY AND THE PEOPLE

Brave warriors united in justice  
in spirit a match for a million  
ready like the myriad cherry blossoms to  
scatter in the spring sky  
of the Showa restoration.<sup>124</sup>

At the time of the Meiji Restoration the great majority of the population of Japan was engaged in agriculture, commerce, or service trade. Only an elite few were allowed to where the double swords which marked them as knights of the bushido code, and the ruling class of Japan. Similarly, at the time of the 1868 revolution which returned the Emperor to defacto power, very few people in Japan were aware of his existence beyond the descriptions of him as a living god, exploited by the Tokugawa for their own benefit.

How is it then that in less than a hundred years that the entire population of Japan, including the remote agrarian regions, would commit itself to a military goal of conquering a large portion of the Asian continent, and would do it in the name of the Emperor? How was the warrior ethic of the bushido knight conveyed to the entire population, and how did the semi-mystical Emperor become a figure whose name would be on the lips of thousands of dying men in their last moments of life? The answers to these questions will detail how history, culture, societal structure, and the people of Japan came together to produce the militarism that led to their national disaster.

### A. THE PEOPLE

By the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, the prestige of the military had suffered numerous challenges to its preeminent position in Japanese civil and social life. The territorial gains of World War I, products of Japan's alliance with England, were offset by the defeat of Germany, which had been held aloft by the Meiji Oligarchs

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<sup>124</sup>Behr, Edward, Hirohito: Behind the Myth, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) p. 124.

as the ideal of strong central government; eroding the Army and Navy's traditional level of public support. Subsequently the celebration of democratic aspirations by the victors of the war ignited a liberal movement in Japan that was decidedly anti-military. Public discontent mounted as the national government, perhaps seeking influence or territory, committed forces to a relief expedition in Siberia which became a three year campaign of national frustration not unlike the United States' experience in Vietnam fifty years later.<sup>125</sup> For a number of years military officers in Tokyo would wear civilian attire rather than face the animosity of fellow commuters.

A contributing factor in the military's decline was the slow disintegration of the clan-based patronage system. Prince Yamagata's death in 1922 signified the end of the Choshu clan's hold on the Army command structure. New leaders emerged who were unfamiliar with the clan alliances of the post Restoration era, and who had no vested interest in continuing them. Often these commanders found themselves leading an officer corps that had no conception of clan values, themselves being sons of village shopkeepers, and landowners.<sup>126</sup>

It was amongst these lower middle class merchants, and agrarian producers that the military found its reservoir of support during these difficult times. To these people the conscription army symbolized the drive for equality in Japanese society. In a society which had celebrated the martial spirit for hundreds of years, the conscription army allowed the son of a peasant to take up arms, and march as an equal with the sons of samurai, or even Imperial Princes.<sup>127</sup> This strong sense of rural pride served to

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<sup>125</sup>Young, pp. 135-142, 160-166.

<sup>126</sup>Lory, p. 153-158.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid, pp. 17-18.

buttress the village society in the rough economic conditions of the nineteen twenties and thirties. It also would provide the catalyst for the spread of militarism during that same period.

As Japan entered the twentieth century, the rural countryside continued to exhibit the historic vestiges of Japan's traditional culture. The population itself was more often than not a collection of interrelated families bound together by a common ancestry, a hereditary grant of land, and governed by Confucian principles first brought to the Japanese islands a thousand years before. Not surprisingly the leadership structure closely resembled the uji clan councils of the distant past. Lacking the "sophistication" of their contemporaries in the cities, the local village population continued to celebrate and worship the local Shinto deities associated with the village and its harvest.

In the nineteen twenties and thirties Japan's economy was still forty-five percent agricultural, but that figure did not accurately represent the distribution of wealth. Despite its large portion of the economy, the agricultural sector produced their products on the sixteen percent of the land in Japan that was actually tillable. Earning only an average of 300 yen a year, the farmer had to spend nearly forty percent of that income on the fertilizer needed to bring life to a soil long since exhausted by centuries of continuous use.<sup>128</sup> Adding to these problems was a government policy of high taxation on the agricultural sector to fund the continued development of the nation's industries.<sup>129</sup> By the mid-nineteen thirties agricultural indebtedness had risen to nearly six billion yen, or nearly seven hundred yen of debt per peasant farmer, more than twice his annual

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<sup>128</sup>Chamberlin, William H., Japan Over Asia, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937) p. 342.

<sup>129</sup>Gunther, John, Inside Asia, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939) p. 41.

income.<sup>130</sup> Facing such insurmountable financial hurdles, rural farmers were often forced by banking agents (who also represented large financial concerns known as *zaibatsu*) to contract out their own daughters to work in city factories. This was only the beginning of a rural aversion for the city.<sup>131</sup>

Rural villagers, staid in their traditional values, rejected the liberal trends of city life. In the nineteen twenties, waves of city inhabitants abandoned Japanese traditions for Western norms. Kimonos were replaced by the three piece suit. Priceless antique art was displaced by gaudy Western designs. Even the Japanese alphabet was threatened by the conscious attempt of the leadership of Japan to introduce romanized writing. Villagers, increasingly convinced that the cities of their country were inhabited only by shallow bankers, merchants, and tax collecting government officials who lived off the sweat of their labor, regarded these activities with contempt.<sup>132</sup> When the great earthquake of 1923 destroyed a large portion of Tokyo, the rural population placed great credence in the charge that it was the angry retribution of a great Shinto deity, who lived beneath the islands, for the wild living of the Tokyo populace.<sup>133</sup>

The army, itself facing rough times during the liberal period of the twenties, appreciated the characteristics of the rural village society, and the tough soldiers it produced. Stronger than their city counterparts, harder working, and more accepting of strict leadership, the

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<sup>130</sup>Chamberlin, pp. 338-339.

<sup>131</sup>Gunther, pp. 39-40.

<sup>132</sup>Storry, Richard, The Double Patriots, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973) p. 11.

<sup>133</sup>Poole, Otis M., The Death of Old Yokohama in the Great Japanese Earthquake of September 1, 1923, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968) pp. 27-61.

village soldier fit easily into the army's hierarchical structure.<sup>134</sup> For its part the army worked with the village leadership; encouraging popular enthusiasm for the draft by calling upon the villages natural Shinto based patriotism. Family concerns were eased by promises to take good care of their sons. Typical of these activities is a letter that often followed the initial draft announcement.

Greetings to the Father and Elder Brother,  
We have learned that your son and brother will shortly experience the greatest joy and satisfaction possible to one of our nation by joining our second company. We congratulate you...When your son and brother enters the barracks, the officers of the company will take your place in looking after his welfare. We will be to him as a stern father and a loving mother. We will always be concerned with his two fold training, body and mind, so that in belonging to the Army he may become a good soldier and a loyal subject of the Emperor. We want to be able to teach him in such a way that he may be able to realize the highest hope of a member of our race...<sup>135</sup>

Soldiers returning from their period of active service were particularly welcome in the village community. Their experiences and the harsh discipline of the Army rounded them out. Village leaders often described the returnees as "total men" capable of immediately assuming leadership roles in the community.<sup>136</sup> So valued were the qualities of the ex-soldiers that they even benefited in the process of matrimony, often receiving the pick of the village maidens in the arranged marriages that still dominated village romance.<sup>137</sup> The Army leaders, for their part, saw an

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<sup>134</sup>Chamberlin, p. 242.

<sup>135</sup>Lory, p. 25.

<sup>136</sup>Smethurst, Richard J., A Social Basis for Prewar Japanese Militarism, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974) pp. 93-95.

<sup>137</sup>Lory, p. 29.

opportunity to benefit themselves by taking advantage of this local prestige.

In the last decade of his life, the old militarist, Marshall Yamagata Aritomo had attempted to pass his mantle of leadership to his disciple, Tanaka Giichi. Tanaka, a Choshu clansman, had served with distinction in the Sino-Japanese War, and had gone on to become a leading Russia expert. By the second decade of the century, both Yamagata and his disciple were convinced of the growing danger of "total war." Each felt that Japan's only hope in the face of a fully mobilized Western enemy lay in a strategy of "National Unity" whereby the entire population would be utilized for the cause of victory. The naturally patriotic, and socially conservative rural populace had long defended its values and interests, but Tanaka happened upon the idea of expanding their support to national issues while maintaining their structurally strong social order. He wanted to create "national villagers" who would identify with the ideas of "National Unity" in the same way that they supported the interests of their own villages.<sup>138</sup>

Recognizing the prestige of their servicemen on reserve status in the villages of the nation, Tanaka and Yamagata founded the Imperial Military Reserve Association on November 3, 1910 to serve as a conduit of "National Unity."<sup>139</sup> The Army, though desirous of the material benefits of modernization, was not yet ready to give up the social history of the samurai that provided them with their identity. It is a fact of history that in the Army leadership's pursuit of unity through the use of cultural "values," the Emperor, and other rallying points, that somehow the monster of militarism got away from them.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>Smethurst, p. xvi.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid, pp. xx-xxi.

## B. AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

Early on in the development of the Reserve Association, Tanaka had a brilliant insight which guaranteed the success of the venture. Contrary to similar militaristic organizations in Europe, the Reserve Association built upon the existing social structure and organization, rather than imposing a new one.<sup>141</sup> Village leaders, landowners and merchants, were called upon to head the new organizations, and group pressures insured the support and cooperation of the remainder of the village population. Tanaka recognized the power of the social-hierarchical system that had been in force for over a thousand years, and was able to harness it to his bidding.<sup>142</sup>

The Reserve Association was nominally organized to allow Army reservists the opportunity to meet together to maintain their martial skills. Calisthenics, close order drill, and the ever present discussions of the Emperor-based, Shinto belief system dominated the weekly meetings. As the organization developed, building upon the prestige of the returning servicemen, it gained a greater opportunity to affect village life. As a vine slowly surrounds another plant, this auxiliary military organization slowly infiltrated every aspect of life in rural Japan.

In July of 1926 the first of a string of Military Youth Training Centers was dedicated in Japan, and was quickly followed by the founding of the National Defense Women's Association.<sup>143</sup> Guided by a cadre of instructors representing the most enthusiastic, and patriotic members of the Reserve Association,<sup>144</sup> these organizations pursued activities that appeared to be perfectly benign, reflecting

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid, pp. 95-96.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid, pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid, pp. 37-45.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid, pp. 118-121.

many of the same activities found in American community organizations. They organized volunteer fire fighting squads, planned and executed village level public works, provided disaster relief, and aid to the families of local men on active duty in the nation's armed forces.

Had these organizations limited themselves to this level of civic involvement, historians would have no cause to suspect militaristic intent, but their participation in the community went further. The Youth Training Centers conducted weekly military drill sessions, the Defense Woman's Association developed plans for assisting the government in a time of war, and, perhaps most insidiously, the Reservist's Association took over the ethics classes in the public schools which Japanese youths were required to attend for six years.<sup>145</sup> These classes, strongly based in the doctrines of Shinto, promoted three principles; loyalty to the throne, a sense of mission in Asia, and a belief in the superior, inborn virtue of the Yamato race.<sup>146</sup>

The source of this virtue, mission, and loyalty, was the Emperor himself. Shinto stressed that the islands of Japan had been formed and inhabited by a race of gods who eventually took on a human form. These primal inhabitants lived under the rule of the descendants of the chief deity, Amaterasu, the sun goddess, who were enthroned as the Emperors of Japan in 660 BC. All current inhabitants of the island were descendants of this early society, and thus represented an extended family under the leadership of an Imperial father-figure. The auxiliary organizations, through word and deed, reminded the village of its link to the nation as a whole by strengthening its loyalty to the Emperor fatherhead. Their level of success led one contemporary observer to state, "Indeed loyalty and filial

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<sup>145</sup>Grew, Joseph C., Report From Tokyo, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942) pp. 50-54.

<sup>146</sup>Storry, p. 5.

piety [to the Emperor} as one is the flower of our national entity, and is the cardinal point of our people's morals."<sup>147</sup> Tanaka and Yamagata had succeeded beyond their expectations, they had created a national village supporting their cause in the name of the Emperor.

In 1924, after a long and debilitating illness, that had left him physically and mentally crippled, the Taisho Emperor died. His successor, the Crown Prince Hirohito, had been the first Imperial Prince in Japanese history to travel abroad, visiting Europe in 1921. Trained and educated by court advisors, the Prince believed his role to be that of a Constitutional Monarch, such as he had observed in Britain. On the day of his enthronement, perhaps as a sign of his outlook on the world, he announced that his reign name would be *Showa*, or Enlightened Peace.<sup>148</sup> Whether he was a pawn, or an active conspirator in the actions of his government that followed, the fact remains that it was during this period that the uniqueness of Japanese militarism placed its stamp on the political evolution of Eastern Asia.

### C. THE RISE OF MILITARY FACTIONS

Although Yamagata Aritomo's death in 1922 effectively ended the era of Choshu clan control of the army, he did leave a lasting legacy. Through his tireless efforts, the Japanese military occupied a special place in the national polity of Japan. The Emperor held the position of Commander in Chief, and the military felt themselves to be the instrument of his, or the nation-state's will. This relationship, as described in the Emperor Meiji's Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors, predated the Constitution, and possessed a higher position in Japan's civil-judicial-

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>148</sup>Mosley, Leonard, Hirohito, Emperor of Japan, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966) pp. 94-95.

religious hierarchy than mere law.<sup>149</sup>

Following Yamagata's passing, no single individual emerged to maintain order within the Army. Tanaka Giichi attempted to step into his mentor's shoes, but his political interests absorbed his energies. Discipline relaxed as non-Choshu officers began to challenge the clan forces which had previously blocked their promotions. The social forces of the post-World War I democratic movement began to take its toll.<sup>150</sup> Within a short time, the Army would appear leaderless, with no cohesive vision of its future.

Slowly, as the years of the nineteen twenties began to roll by, the power within the military began to shift. By nineteen twenty seven, thirty percent of the Army's junior officers were the sons of shopkeepers and landowners. Nearly ninety percent of the enlisted soldiers hailed from working class backgrounds.<sup>151</sup> Representing a different demographic section of Japanese society than their predecessors, these men carried with them the ideals of their social environment as they climbed the promotion ladder. By the end of the decade the Army would publicly oppose the corruption of party politics, and the collusion between the parties and the large economic zaibatsu. Military participation in civil and social affairs reached a point unimaginable to Yamagata a few short years before.

In the years following the establishment of the modern Army, Japanese military philosophy took a direction unique from European models. Planning, and training did not focus on guns, formations, or logistics, but was directed at cultivating the martial spirit. Building upon the heritage of Bushido, the Army leadership, perhaps realizing their disadvantage in the face of Western technology, promoted the

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<sup>149</sup>Spector, Ronald H., Eagle Against the Sun, (New York: The Free Press, 1985) pp. 33-34.

<sup>150</sup>Storry, pp. 42-43.

<sup>151</sup>Lory, p. 158.

idea that a soldier possessing only mediocre weapons but motivated by reverence for the Emperor could defeat the uninspired soldiers of the West.<sup>152</sup> From the first day of induction into the conscription army until their last days in the reserves, the Japanese male population was indoctrinated into the beliefs of the Bushido code, and the Imperial Way.<sup>153</sup>

Care was taken to guide and protect the minds of the soldiers, keeping them pure and reverential towards the Emperor.<sup>154</sup> For officers this process began at the age of twelve when they entered one of several service academies after passing a competitive examination.<sup>155</sup> For nearly six years they trained, drilled, and studied the art of war from a Bushido perspective. Like the enlisted men, these young officer candidates were encouraged to meditate on the themes of the Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors.<sup>156</sup> The Rescript served to transmit the values of the Samurai (loyalty, courage, frugality, etc..) throughout the army. It became holy writ, and inspired Japanese soldiers to follow the orders of their superiors, who acted in the name of the Emperor, with almost religious devotion. In battle, the soldiers were promised, they would be guided by the same Shinto kami that had always watched over the land of the gods. The Army never rehearsed the correct way to withdraw from an engagement, retreat would be too demoralizing.<sup>157</sup> Foreign observers reported Japanese soldiers dying in droves during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), and the Russo-

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<sup>152</sup>Grew, p. 14.

<sup>153</sup>Huntington, p. 128.

<sup>154</sup>Lory, p. 71.

<sup>155</sup>Spector, p. 34.

<sup>156</sup>Lory, p. 53.

<sup>157</sup>Chamberlin, p. 361-362.

Japanese War (1904-05). They were convinced that their spirits would be transported to the *Yasukuni-jinja* (shrine) in Tokyo, where they would be honored by the Emperor himself in prayer.<sup>158</sup> The weight of death in the Emperor's service was considered to be "lighter than a feather."

The politics of the nineteen twenties had little sympathy for notions of honor or for the military's traditional role in Japanese society. Retrenchment policies, which manifested themselves in cutbacks in the size of the military, and the disarmament treaties of Foreign Minister Shidehara were interpreted as direct threats to the Emperor's "Sovereign Power." The gap widened between the politicians and the militarists, and the separation became complete in the disastrous years of the late twenties and early thirties when the Great Depression hit Japan with its full force.

People in the agrarian regions, still facing high taxes, demonstrated time again against the liberal excesses of the government. Leaders of the large zaibatsu were assassinated in the streets, blamed for disparate levels of wealth and poverty in Japan.<sup>159</sup> Facing starvation in many cases, Japan's desperate population searched for succor from any source. As one Japanese observed,

As for a dictatorship, the Japanese people for centuries were under the benevolent rule of a Tokugawa; and some elements might not be so averse, as some would believe, to exchanging the present economic thralldom, with its deceiving facade of freedom, for an out and out political subservience provided it was accompanied by some surcease from the grinding heel of poverty.<sup>160</sup>

Within the Army, two competing factions emerged to answer the desperate pleas of the people.

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<sup>158</sup>Noss, David S., and John B., p. 343.

<sup>159</sup>Roberts, pp. 273-276.

<sup>160</sup>Japan Times, 11th May, 1932 as quoted in Storry, p. 125.

The first of these two groups, the *Tosei-ha*, or Control Faction, was composed of officers of moderate outlooks. Although it did seek a larger role for the military in Japanese government, this faction sought to solve Japan's economic and governmental problems by making use of the system at hand, altering it to suit their purposes. Relief from the pangs of poverty would be found in an increased commitment to the capitalistic system, industrial expansion at home (under careful government supervision), and through the acquisition of materials and markets in China. While the *Tosei-ha* was willing to acquire these goals through diplomacy, the other faction, the *Kodo-ha* (Imperial Way Faction) was not.<sup>161</sup>

For most of the young officers that composed the *Kodo-ha*, the struggle for power represented an all to real struggle for survival. These officers were, by and large, the sons of the agrarian and working class people who were hardest hit by the depression. True to their conservative heritage, *Kodo-ha*'s membership opposed the labor strikes and other outward expressions of Western liberalism while simultaneously expressing a Confucian based loyalty with those suffering from economic shortfalls.<sup>162</sup> Many officers would share their own small earnings with their men,<sup>163</sup> while others deserted their posts to travel home to share the economic hardships of their parents.<sup>164</sup>

Domestically this faction sought nothing less than a revolutionary overthrow of the present form of government. Convinced that corrupt government and business officials were preventing the Emperor from speaking with his true voice, the officers called for a "Showa Restoration" to

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<sup>161</sup>Lory, pp. 179-180.

<sup>162</sup>Spector, p. 34.

<sup>163</sup>Lory, p. 91.

<sup>164</sup>Harries, Meirion and Susie, p. 178.

complete the revolution that had begun in 1868. Once this task was accomplished, the Kodo-ha felt, the Emperor would be free to ease the economic suffering of his people, and then could move on to benefit the rest of the world through his divine leadership.<sup>165</sup> The spread of the Imperial Way in Asia served as the idealistic base of the Kodo-ha's foreign policy. Drawing upon the Shinto beliefs that had been instilled in them since young age in the village schools, the young officers felt that Japan had a special mission in Asia.<sup>166</sup>

The center of this phenomenal world is the Mikado's [Emperor's] land. From this center we must expand this Great Spirit throughout the world....The expansion of Great Japan throughout the world and the elevation of the entire world into the land of the Gods is the urgent business of the present and, again, it is our eternal and unchanging object.<sup>167</sup>

Increasingly the Kodo-ha looked towards the Asian mainland as the answer to Japan's economic distress. The annexation of Korea had brought new resources and markets into the Japanese economy in 1911, and the Kodo-ha believed that the rich resources of Soviet Siberia, or China's Manchuria would more than make up for the setbacks of the Depression. Driven by a messianic vision of a united Asia under Imperial rule, the Kodo-ha pressed for the establishment of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, to be established by force if necessary.<sup>168</sup> For the Kodo-ha, "whatever promotes the rule of the Emperor is right.

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<sup>165</sup>Lory, p. 176.

<sup>166</sup>Smethurst, pp. 164-165.

<sup>167</sup>Holton, D.C., "The Political Philosophy Of Modern Shinto," in Vol. XLIX, Part II, of Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, (Tokyo, 1922) pp. 107-108.

<sup>168</sup>Storry, p. 35.

Whatever thwarts or hinders the extension of this rule is wrong."<sup>169</sup>

Of course the greatest restriction to Japanese expansion was the opposition of the West. The Imperial powers of Europe combined with the United States to oppose Japan. This presented no problem for the inspired young officers. Japan, the victor over white Russia, would lead Asia out of bondage, dividing the world between the Anglo-Saxons, the Soviets, and themselves.<sup>170</sup> If the Europeans and Americans would not voluntarily acknowledge the greater innate virtues of the Japanese Emperor and his people, then they would be overcome. The Asians caught in the middle would, of course, be grateful to their liberators.<sup>171</sup>

These two factions, by and large, represented a growing part of the public debate in Japan. This debate reflected a dichotomy within the Japanese psyche expressing conflicting pulls towards independent growth, and military expansion; a divisive gap between a pragmatic view of Japanese nationalism, and an idealistic belief in a pseudo-religious, "chosen" position in the family of man. For many of the Japanese, the outcome of the debate was never in doubt. Japan's national outlook is clearly expressed in the reminisces of one visitor to Japan during the early nineteen thirties.

Soon after my arrival in Japan I had an interesting talk with a professor in one of the leading Tokyo universities. He remarked that, as the people of North China are of the same racial stock as the majority of the inhabitants of Manchukuo [Manchuria], it would only be natural if, in time, these two territories should come under the same [Japanese] sovereignty.

Then, he suggested, would come the turn of vast, sparsely populated Outer Mongolia.

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<sup>169</sup>Lory, p. 34.

<sup>170</sup>Storry, p. 149.

<sup>171</sup>Grew, pp. 62-65.

This professor characterized himself as a "sane liberal."<sup>172</sup>

#### D. JAPANESE MILITARISM IN BLOOM

By nineteen thirty one, the world wide depression had been two years in existence. Governments everywhere were searching for ways to decrease their spending, reduce the tax burden, and find jobs for their unemployed labor force. To facilitate this undertaking, United States' President Herbert Hoover suggested convening a Worldwide Disarmament Conference to cut the world's war-making potential by half.<sup>173</sup>

For the factions within the Japanese military this conference presented an all to real threat to their power. Previously they had been forced to standby and watch as Japanese participation in international disarmament conferences resulted in cuts in the size and capabilities of the Army and the Navy. Increasingly transfixed by the looming threat of the growing Soviet potential to their north, and the inviting lure of Manchuria's rich mineral resources to their west, both of the Imperial Army's leading factions quietly leaked that any consideration of further reductions in the nation's war-making potential would be an unacceptable intrusion on the Emperor's sovereign right of national defense. While this did momentarily block the disarmament initiative, the military knew that it would have to act overtly if it was to seize control of the nation's foreign policy agenda. Both of the factions, the Tosei-ha and Kodo-ha, chose a course of action which reflected their basic beliefs. The evolution of militarism in Japan was reaching its climax in Japan, and it was running out of choices.

The leader of the Tosei-ha faction, General Ugaki

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<sup>172</sup>Chamberlin, pp. 6-7.

<sup>173</sup>Harries, pp. 150-151.

Kazushige had been a prominent player in cabinet politics throughout the nineteen twenties, serving several times as War Minister.<sup>174</sup> As the liberal challenge to the military's power in Japanese politics began to mount, Ugaki, ignoring the traditional warning against military involvement in political matters, led the Tosei-ha in its active reach for political power. Interpreting the 1885 Rescript's command to defend the nation as having a higher priority than political abstinence, Ugaki justified his ambition as being necessary for the national defense.

The death of Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi, who had never fully recovered from an assassin's attack the previous year, in nineteen thirty one created a power vacuum in the turbulent political storm of Depression Japan. Conservative interests, including the Army, promoted Ugaki's name as a possible successor to the premiership, but liberal elements, including the last remaining Genro, Prince Saionji, blocked his nomination.<sup>175</sup> The Army, however, was not willing to let the matter drop. Weapons were stockpiled and an "incident" at the Diet was planned which would necessitate the calling up of the Army to restore order. It would be an attempt to place Ugaki and the Tosei-ha in power through a coup. This plan came to nothing largely because Ugaki wished to succeed to power through the use of the Constitutional system.<sup>176</sup>

The Kodo-ha, with its strong belief in the mystical "Imperial Way" had no compunctions against working outside of the established system to achieve their aims. Their goals were centered in the expansion of the Japanese Empire through the acquisition of territory on the Asian mainland,

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<sup>174</sup>Mitani, Taichiro, "The Establishment of Party Cabinets, 1898-1932," in The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. VI, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 93-95.

<sup>175</sup>Connors, Lesley, The Emperor's Advisor, (London: Croom Helm, 1987) p. 114.

<sup>176</sup>Harries, p. 147.

specifically in Chinese Manchuria. To accomplish these aims, the leaders of the Kodo-ha chose to deliberately attack the current system of government, undermining it through the use of overt public influence, well executed "incidents," and skill use of the ambiguous, independent diplomatic role afforded the Japanese military under the Imperial Commander in Chief clause of the Meiji Constitution. Aware of the implicit threat of disarmament, the Kodo-ha sought to create an "incident" in China which could serve to heighten public support for expansion onto the Asian mainland. It would not be the first time that the Kwantung Army, a Japanese force rife with young, hot-headed Kodo-ha supporters posted to Manchuria ostensibly to protect the south Manchurian railway zone, had acted upon its own "diplomatic" initiative.<sup>177</sup>

During the mid nineteen twenties the Japanese had backed the Chinese Warlord Chang Tso-lin in an effort to offset the growing Russian influence in China, and to maintain the fractured power structure on the continent that had so greatly benefited Japanese strategists in the past. However, Chang Tso-lin became ambitious and sought to expand his power beyond the Manchurian region that had been his center. He had conceived ideas of a new Imperial dynasty in China, with himself as its founder.<sup>178</sup> Defeat greeted his ambition, and he was soon forced to retreat back to his lair in Manchuria. As his train passed Mukden on June 4, 1928 the "Old Marshall," who had once been counted as a Japanese ally until he became too unmanageable, was killed by a bomb conveniently thrown into his compartment.<sup>179</sup> The Kwantung Army quickly blamed the "incident" on bandits, and pressed for expanded police powers in the region. Back home in

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<sup>177</sup>Lory, p. 185.

<sup>178</sup>Behr, pp. 63-64.

<sup>179</sup>Gunther, pp. 110-111.

Japan, realizing the identity of the "bandits," the government quickly halted any movements towards expansion, and buried the situation lest any foreign power learn of Japanese complicity in the crime. While the first Kodo-ha--Kwantung attempt at initiating Japanese military action in Asia did fail, it eventually led to the fall of a cabinet at home, further weakening democracy's hold on Japanese politics.<sup>180</sup> Lessons were being learned.

In the spring of 1931 word began to circulate around the Japanese capital of an impending incident in Manchuria of great importance.<sup>181</sup> Inactivity on the part of the Japanese forces in China had led to a relative decline in its prestige on the continent, and the Chinese warlords, under the leadership of the Nationalist Chiang Kai-shek were patching up their political differences to present a united front. Earlier the Chinese had captured a Japanese spy posing as an agricultural agent, and had shot him. The challenge to the Japanese position was building, and the Kwantung Army was not planning to let the politicians in Tokyo handle it.

Word of their plans reached the cabinet, and then the Emperor himself was informed. Commanded to appear before the Throne, the War Minister, General Minami Jiro, was informed personally by the Emperor to command the Kwantung Army to "proceed with caution." General Minami, a member of the Kodo-ha, sent the orders via Major-General Tatekawa Yoshitsugu, another diehard radical who proceeded to Manchuria via a slow boat, even though other, quicker transportation was available.<sup>182</sup> Upon his arrival, he dallied at a local restaurant, falling into a drunken stupor and sleeping through the opening moments of the Manchurian

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<sup>180</sup>Borton, p. 313.

<sup>181</sup>Connors, p. 128.

<sup>182</sup>Behr, pp. 91-92.

campaign. Later he would explain the failure of his mission by stating, "I didn't make it on time."<sup>183</sup>

The "incident" that started the campaign was almost a comedy of errors. The Kwantung Army, nominally the protectors of the South Manchurian Railroad, set out to blow up a section of the track, derail a train, and then use the incident to attack Chinese forces in the area. While the explosion did go off, the train proceeded over the damaged section of track without incident.<sup>184</sup> Undeterred by the lack of an accident, the Kwantung Army attacked the Chinese forces in the area under the command of Chang Hsueh-liang, the son of the "Old Marshall," Chang Tso-lin. Ordered by Chiang Kai-shek, who was depending upon the power of the League of Nations to aid him, not to resist Japanese aggression, Chang Hsueh-liang retreated as the Kwantung, acting in the name of "self defense, soon conquered most of Manchuria."<sup>185</sup>

The Japanese government, facing a fait accompli, was forced to accept the Army's explanation of Chinese aggression, and the Japanese people, believing that the conquest of Manchuria would provide economic relief and great glory for the Emperor were enthusiastic in their approval of the action. The radical elements of the Army had successfully exploited the independent nature of their relationship to the Emperor to carve out an expansionist foreign policy that was counter to the civil government. Their strong support from the working class, built by years of patient infiltration into the village and town social structure, coupled with the decades-long Shinto indoctrination within the school system provided the

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<sup>183</sup>Hata, Ikuhiko, "Continental Expansion, 1905-1941," in The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. VI (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 295.

<sup>184</sup>Harries, pp. 152-153.

<sup>185</sup>Borton, pp. 328-330.

expansion movement with an almost messianic air. However, not all nations regarded the Japanese as the saviors of the Asian continent.

The Chinese nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-shek, for his part placed his faith in the international community to remove the Japanese presence in Manchuria. Asking for assistance, Chiang was pleased when the League of Nations, Woodrow Wilson's great dream, dispatched a commission under the leadership of Lord Victor Alexander Lytton to investigate the matter.<sup>186</sup> Attempting to distract the Western powers long enough for the Kwantung to consolidate its hold in Manchuria, the Japanese Army "came the assistance" of Japanese nationals in Shanghai who were being "mistreated" by Chinese citizens angry over the seizure of Manchuria. The Lytton Commission was not distracted. In 1932 it issued a scathing report accusing Japan of "naked aggression" in violation of the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact.<sup>187</sup> The people of Japan, at once sensitive to and contemptuous of outside judgement, reacted strongly against the diplomatic machinations that had previously taken away or downgraded Japan's military victories.<sup>188</sup> Convinced of the righteousness of their cause (acting as the anti-Imperialist agent in Asia), and of the unfair nature of the League's charges, Japan withdrew from the body rather than face the censure of the international community.

The party-led government attempted to reestablish some semblance of control over the nation's foreign policy, but soon it was in a struggle even to preserve its hold over the domestic scene. Assassinations, a traditional tool of Japanese extremists, removed the moderate Prime Minister Inukai, business leader such as Baron Dan Takuma of the

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<sup>186</sup>Gunther, pp. 112-115.

<sup>187</sup>Spector, p. 36.

<sup>188</sup>Gunther, p. 33.

Mitsui zaibatsu, and Inoue Junnosuke, a former Finance Minister; cowering the remaining officials with the implicit threat of execution.<sup>189</sup> In China attempts by senior commanders to establish control over the periphery were thwarted by young officers uneasy with peace, and desirous of a glorious death in the expansion of the Emperor's enlightened domain. Reflecting the growth of acceptance for militarism, in each case of assassination or expansion the initial public shock and disdain was soon replaced by support once the perpetrator's "patriotic" intentions were made known. Assassins served little to no time in jail, and the overzealous officers were not court martialed.<sup>190</sup> To top it all off, in 1935 the conflict between the Tosei-ha and Kodo-ha factions within the army, previously hidden from public view, broke into the open in a power struggle for key positions on the General Staff.

In the summer of 1935 the Tosei-ha, in an effort to block Kodo-ha influence, reassigned or retired a number of officers on the Imperial General Staff. A member of the Kodo-ha, Lieutenant Colonel Aizawa, confronted the officer responsible, Lieutenant General Nagata, the Director of the Military Affairs Bureau, and demanded, on patriotic grounds, that it was his duty to reassign the officers to their old positions. When the General demurred, Aizawa shot and killed him.<sup>191</sup>

The Minister of War, General Hayashi, facing accusations that the Army lacked disciplinary control of its officers, resigned his seat. Nagata's assassination aggravated tensions that had long been present both within the cabinet and the Diet. In January of 1936 the Diet dissolved and the subsequent election delivered a strong blow to the

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<sup>189</sup>Oka, Yoshitake, Five Political Leaders of Modern Japan, (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1986) pp. 206-207.

<sup>190</sup>Beasley, p. 247.

<sup>191</sup>Borton, p. 338.

nationalist extremists by decreasing their representation in the assembly. High inflation, the strain of continuous growth in military spending, and the fanatical behavior of the extremists had cooled the public affection for the military.<sup>192</sup>

Radicals are seldom deterred by democratic mandates, and the Kodo-ha were no exception. The election of 1936 served to prove to the members of the Kodo-ha that the corrupting influences of the liberal West had spread farther than they had thought, and that immediate action was required to preserve the sanctity of the "Land of the Gods." "The Emperor's voice must be heard" they declared. Those liberal elements that had surrounded the Emperor, badly advising him, and blocking his voice from the people, must be removed to facilitate his return to direct rule, and the expansion of that rule across Asia.<sup>193</sup>

In a significant break from past tradition, the death of Nagata signified that senior military officers were now classified among those "badly" advising the Emperor. Previously the members of the military chain of command were considered to speak with the Emperor's voice when issuing orders to juniors. The radicals of the Kodo-ha brought a new interpretation to the old tradition. If an officer was convinced that his superior misinterpreted "the true Imperial will" (of course, correctly interpreted by the Kodo-ha member), then disobedience to the senior's orders is not only justified, but necessary.<sup>194</sup>

On the morning of February 26, 1936 several groups of young officers and their men fanned out across Tokyo, and other key centers of Japan. Their goal, drawing upon the example of the Forty-Seven Ronin, was to assassinate key

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<sup>192</sup>Storry, p. 140-153.

<sup>193</sup>Gunther, p. 93-96.

<sup>194</sup>Lory, p. 183.

officials who were blocking expansionists policies, and then deliver themselves to the Emperor. Within hours the Finance Minister, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, the 77 year old Privy Councilor Admiral Saito Makoto, and the Inspector General of Military Education were dead. The Imperial Grand Chamberlain was seriously wounded, and the Prime Minister himself escaped death only because the rebels, in a case of mistaken identity, shot his brother-in-law.<sup>195</sup> Appealing to the patriotic senses of the population, the mutineers released a "Great Purpose Manifesto." It said, in part,

In recent years...there have appeared many persons whose chief aim and purpose have been to amass personal material wealth, disregarding the general welfare and prosperity of the Japanese population, with the result that the sovereignty of the Emperor has been greatly violated. The people of Japan have suffered deeply as a result of this tendency, and many troublous issues now confronting Japan are attributable to this fact.

The Genro, senior statesmen, military cliques, plutocrats, bureaucrats, and political parties are all traitors who are destroying the national polity. They infringed on the Imperial right of Supreme Command.....The Imperial work will fail unless we take proper steps to safeguard the Fatherland by killing all those responsible for impeding the Showa Restoration.<sup>196</sup>

The "Manifesto" itself was carried to the Emperor by the War Minister.<sup>197</sup> Never had the Imperial wrath been so evident. Hirohito, angry at the deaths of his councilors, and at the presumption of the rebel officers in announcing his "true" Imperial will, refused to acknowledge or meet any of the demands of the rebels. He ordered the army to put the mutiny down, and when the army delayed in the execution of his order the Emperor announced his intention to lead the

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<sup>195</sup>Connors, p. 162.

<sup>196</sup>Chamberlin, pp. 248-249.

<sup>197</sup>Mosley, p. 142.

loyal Imperial forces himself.<sup>198</sup> Slowly, as the Imperial intentions became known, the enlisted men within the revolt trickled away and returned to their barracks. Eighty-one hours after it had began the revolt ended. The Kodo-ha officers never got the opportunity to make their appeals to public patriotism in an open trial. Instead they faced a closed court martial proceedings, and a quick death.<sup>199</sup>

From many perspectives the February 26, 1936 uprising would represent the defeat of militarist forces in Japan, but in the long run it signified a return to real military rule in Modern Japan. While the influence of the Kodo-ha was broken (they would never exert influence on policy again) the Tosei-ha's influence increased. Promoting the impression that it alone had saved the Emperor from revolt, the Control faction regained Imperial sanction for the rule that only active duty, three and four star officers could be appointed to the War and Navy Minister Portfolios.<sup>200</sup> This gave the military approval power over cabinet appointments and the government policy. By the end of nineteen thirty seven, the political parties had lost much of their influence over the cabinet, and national policy. The Diet would remain, but it reverted to the impotent state that had marked its activities during the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth.

The Kodo-ha did enjoy one victory. Tosei-ha strategic planners adopted the Kodo-ha's expansion doctrine into Asia as its own, and began to more actively promote military conquest.<sup>201</sup> The hold of the messianic Imperial Way doctrine, and its offshoot the Co-Prosperity Sphere, was strong amongst the working people of Japan, and the Generals

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<sup>198</sup>Behr, pp. 139-140.

<sup>199</sup>Mosley, p. 146.

<sup>200</sup>Harries, p. 193.

<sup>201</sup>Borton, p. 341.

of the Tosei-ha had to pay some respect to the masses.

In the outlying areas the informal organizations like the Reservist Association, the expansionist Black Dragon society, and the Cherry Blossom society agitated for the "expansion of Imperial peace" throughout Asia.<sup>202</sup> The pressures of a swelling population, high unemployment, inflation, and social discontent fueled the dreams of many in the rural communities to find prosperity elsewhere. Acquisition of new territory would benefit all parties involved; providing the Japanese with new room for growth, and the indigenous populations with a "superior" form of government. As one rural leader would say,

The rational distribution of territory, national resources, and population--this should be the keynote of international peace. The establishment of world peace is Japan's aim. No country in the world has so high a mission as Japan to save the world.<sup>203</sup>

Tosei-ha leaders quickly moved to shore up their relations with these nationalist groups in the months that followed the Kodo-ha's defeat and disgrace. Pronouncing agreement with the group's expansionist goals, the Tosei-ha supported the expansion of Shinto-based education programs in the nations' schools and universities, buying time to shore up their control of the government, and the strength of the wartime economy.

Within government the influential Tosei-ha War Minister exerted a strong influence over the cabinet of Prime Minister Hirota Koki, which had been formed in March of 1936. Covering its steps with calls for reform, the Army, through continuous threats of resignation of its War Minister, pushed through a series of proposals which effectively streamlined the industrial, administrative and political structures; centralizing power in the national

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<sup>202</sup>Storry, pp. 165-169.

<sup>203</sup>Gunther, p. 51.

government. A five year economic plan was drafted by the Army's mobilization planners, and submitted to the cabinet for approval. Liberal elements within the government were aghast at the Army's blatant bid for power, but there was very little they could do. The Tosei-ha leaders headed off liberal attempts to derail their plans by publicly questioning the government's patriotism, and privately expressing fears of another February 26 incident if power was not centralized. When the cabinet called the Army's bluff, the enraged War Minister resigned, and no replacement stepped forward. The cabinet folded.<sup>204</sup>

The next cabinet, headed by Prince Konoye, pointedly excluded all party participation, and was more accommodating to the Army's wishes. Passing a five year plan which placed the highest priority on Japan's military strength, the government considered all of its policies from the standpoint of their contribution to the nation's defense. The government exerted its control over credit, extending financial aid only to those industrial sectors deemed strategic. Support for the military's plans grew with the expanding mobilization economy in Japan. As the nation became more involved in preparedness, those industries favored by the militarists stepped up their production. Steel, chemical, machine tool industries all expanded.<sup>205</sup> People who had faced economic hardships for nearly eight years now had money in their pockets. Support for the new government policies grew. Later the early profits of expansion would be offset by the increased costs of imported raw resources that were necessary for the nation's survival. The rising trade deficit led to rising red ink in Japan's

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<sup>204</sup>Berger, Gordon M., "Politics and Mobilization in Japan, 1931-1945," in The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. VI, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 120-121.

<sup>205</sup>Buss, Claude A., Asia in the Modern World (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1964) pp. 399-400.

budgets, and increased taxes for the Japanese people.<sup>206</sup> Coupled with the patriotic and religious support for expansion, it was not difficult to convince the public of the further need for expansion and conquest to gain access to the vital raw materials needed to guarantee the nation's autonomy in an increasingly hostile world.

Political dissent was forbidden. Public education, the mass media, and government pronouncements all issued coordinated statements pronouncing the frivolity of the West, and Japan's destiny in Asia. Secret police scrutinized the population, jailing anyone who spoke out against the military.<sup>207</sup> By the elections of 1937, Army control of the political process had reached a point where they were able to order all political candidates to ignore Japan's overseas activities, to refrain from mentioning any factional fights within the Army, or insinuate that the Army was a political organization.<sup>208</sup>

On the night of July 7, 1937 a firefight broke out between Japanese forces stationed near the Marco Polo Bridge and the local Chinese.<sup>209</sup> Some in Japan resisted the impulse to become involved in a land war on the Asian continent before the five year plan had the opportunity to take effect. Others, heeding the popular call for a new order in Asia, saw an opportunity to quickly destroy the growing Nationalist Chinese influence in China, establishing a Japanese hegemony on the continent sooner rather than later. Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese Nationalist leader, made a tactical decision to trade ground for time, and settled in for a long war.<sup>210</sup> Japan would be in nearly continuous

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<sup>206</sup>Chamberlin, pp. 319-336.

<sup>207</sup>Buss, pp. 400-401.

<sup>208</sup>Lory, p. 150-151.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid, p. 144.

<sup>210</sup>Buss, p. 402.

conflict for the next eight years.

In the months and years following the February 26, 1936 rebellion the increasingly political leaders of the Tosei-ha followed the popular opinion favoring expansion, but they asked for something in return. They demanded, using Yamagata's and Tanaka's words, National Unity. Promoting and expanding upon the Shinto-based conservatism of the villages, the Generals organized the nation's populace along hierarchical lines. Cabinet maneuvering allowed them to gain access and control of the allocation of economic resources. Their status as direct subordinates of the Emperor allowed them to hold the very stability of the ruling government for ransom, and they received increased central control of the nation's administrative apparatus as their payoff. Their actions were defined as "militarism," but they were in fact something greater; a national mobilization along economic, cultural, spiritual, and military lines.



## VI. A TRANSITIONAL VERDICT ON JAPANESE MILITARISM

By the summer of 1945 the Allied Powers of the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union had defeated Nazi Germany on the plains of Europe, and was gearing up to attack Japan. Prior to the planned operations against the Japanese home islands the leaders of the United States, Great Britain and China gathered in Potsdam to discuss strategy. At the conclusion of their discussions they united to issue a proclamation calling upon the Japanese to surrender unconditionally, or face total destruction.<sup>211</sup> Japan, suffering under the stinging blows of nearly three years in retreat was still proud, but even that pride gave way under the force of the atomic bomb.

On August 14, 1945 the citizens of Japan gathered around their radios to hear something they had never before experienced, the voice of their Emperor. Already bowed by the pressures of war, the people anticipated a call for the hand to hand defense of their islands in the face of certain invasion by Allied forces. Instead they received another message that will always resonate in Japan.

To Our good and loyal subjects:

After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining in Our Empire today, We have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation....Despite the best that has been done by everyone...the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage...the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is indeed incalculable...Should We continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization...Let the entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its faith of the imperishableness of its divine land...work with resolution so as ye may enhance the innate glory

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<sup>211</sup>See Appendix C.

of the Imperial State and keep pace with the progress of the world.<sup>212</sup>

The message was clear to the Japanese people. The Emperor had not surrendered, he had not capitulated, but had instead effected a settlement. His divine Majesty had ordered the war to end, not just for the good of Japan, but also for the good of all mankind. The Japanese family survived, living within its divine land. The nation's energy's would be focused in other directions, away from military expansion, seeking new ways to demonstrate the chosen nature of the Yamato race.

Upon receiving the Potsdam Proclamation, military leaders had initially spoken out against proposals to end the war, while others in the Japanese government saw no other way out. In the end the cabinet, deadlocked, called upon the Emperor for his advice, and it was his decision to surrender. Unable to suffer the indignity of listening to his Emperor's speech, the War Minister, General Anami, slit open his belly and then punctured his jugular vein just hours before the broadcast. Eighteen days later, on board the USS Missouri, Toshikazu Kase stared at the rows of Japanese flags that were affixed to the bulkhead of the great battleship and thought, "How did this happen?" It was and is an excellent question.

In this thesis I have sought to understand militarism in Japan during the years proceeding World War II. The literature devoted to the subject of militarism illuminated a tendency towards broad definitions, derived generally from the German example, which showed little interest in the richness and complexity of the culture, events, and individuals that made the Japanese experience unique in world events. By contrast, the discipline of historic analysis, a deep read of militarism's development in Japan, demonstrated great promise in defining the phenomenon.

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<sup>212</sup> See Appendix D for the entire Rescript.

Militarism in pre-World War II Japan was a product of Japan's culture, manifested within certain internal domestic organizations, and exacerbated by the encroaching pressures of foreign interests.

Of these three contributing sources Japan's own traditional culture exerted the greatest and most defining influence. Beginning with the clan-*uji*-units that existed before recorded history in the islands, a number of themes emerged which guides Japanese thought through the present day. The most recognizable effect of the clan period was the development of the extended Japanese national family. Just as each individual in sixth century Japan knew his or her position in the complex, family-based, hierarchical structure that comprised the clan, so to did each Japanese in the third decade of this century recognize and acknowledge his or her position in the extended hierarchical structure of the Imperial state.

The notion of the extended "Japanese" national family was strengthened by the continuing influence of Japan's native religion, Shinto. Within the doctrines of Shinto all Japanese are descendants of a group of primal deities who created the Japanese islands thousands of years before. As the living descendants of Amaterasu, the preeminent, life giving sun goddess, the Yamato clan established itself as the rulers and high priests of the islands. Nearly a millennium and a half later the clan's leader, the Emperor Hirohito, reigned during World War Two as a reminder of the Yamato race's divine origin, and as a father figure for the greatly extended modern Japanese family.

Other religions and philosophies left their mark upon militarism's development. Confucian provided structure to the irregular, chaotic proceedings of the Japanese court. Later, the spread of Buddhism to the Japanese islands, with its emphasis on ceremony, distracted the Imperial court and allowed the military Shogunates to gain influence. Seeking to advance their own interests, the military governments at

Kamakura, Kyoto, and later Edo advanced the influence of Zen amongst the military class. A hybrid of Chinese Confucianism and Buddhism, Zen evolved in Japan to incorporate and reflect the nation's own native Shinto beliefs. This emerging philosophy contributed in its own way to the Bushido Code, which held little regard for life, valuing instead a stable social order, personal honor, loyalty, and sacrifice in the name of duty to one's superior.

By most appearances Japan's governmental structure remained constant throughout the ages. From the time the council of uji chiefs ceded authority to the Yamato leader until the end of World War Two, the Emperor remained the permanent source of power, civil and military. Appearances, however, were only parts of reality.

Within two hundred years of the establishment of the central Imperial government in Japan the Fujiwara family had conspired to rule the islands by Regency from "behind the curtain." Later Shogunates extended this precedent, establishing dual lines of authority in the military capitals at Kamakura, Kyoto, and Edo. By controlling taxes, court appointments, and other levers of influence, the military ruled as the de facto leaders of Japan until 1868 while the Imperial institution atrophied under the weight of meaningless ceremonial duties.

The revolutionary fervor of the Meiji Restoration destroyed many of the ineffectual social and governmental structures of Japan's feudal era, replacing them with efficient Western models which had been formed in the foundry's of the industrial revolution. Ancient court councils and bloated military bureaucracies were replaced by parliamentary cabinets, traditional clothing disappeared, samurai no longer wore their swords, and a new conscription army protect the young government. By the end of the nineteenth century Japanese militarism had become, by all outward appearances, like its counterparts in the West, but,

despite its Western facade, in its heart it remained Japanese. Nowhere was this fact more evident than in the Imperial Army.

The leaders of the Imperial Army were more than willing to adapt superior Western uniforms, weapons, and tactics to their cause, and they were open to the advantages of an conscription army in the age of total mobilization, but they were also intent on maintaining the elemental Japanese characteristics of their organization and culture. Rifle toting infantryman were encouraged to be practicing Shintoist; passionately believing in the superiority of his country, and the divinity of his Emperor. Orders flowed within a chain of command shaped not by liberal notions of individual equality, but by the strict social regulation of Asian Confucianism. Military leaders preserved the traditional dual nature of the Japanese government by subjugating the military, within the framework of the Meiji constitution, directly to the Emperor as opposed to the parliamentary cabinet. In the end, the conscription army served as a conduit for the transmission of the Bushido Code of the samurai to the entire breadth and width of the nation, profoundly impacting its development.

The undisciplined nature of democratic parliamentary politics, soon captured by financial interests, was increasingly perceived as contaminated. Conversely the conscription army was perceived as a vehicle of social equality, allowing each individual Japanese male to carry a weapon in his nation's defense; a level of service previously reserved to samurai. Military leaders anxious to establish "National Unity" borrowed from the structures of Western populist movements to establish auxiliary organizations in local communities to support the army, and promote the expansion of the Shintoist Imperial Way throughout Asia. In time the military was able to portray itself as the pure protectors of the *kokutai* or "national essence" of Japan.

The perceived threat to the "essence" came from the international system which had so rudely awakened Japan from its long sleep of isolation in 1854. Imposing the treaty condition of extraterritoriality upon the less advanced Japanese, the Western powers unwittingly bruised the fierce pride of the "divine" Yamato race. While the cries of "revere the Emperor-expel the barbarians" soon faded, replaced by "revere the Emperor-strengthen the nation," the Japanese never forgot the humiliation of the unequal treaties and worked constantly to gain acknowledgement of Japanese equality. Treaty revision coincided with the Japan's first large scale military venture onto the Asian mainland, but many of the advances of that successful campaign were subsequently lost in diplomatic bargaining after the guns fell silent. Japan entered the twentieth century convinced of the unfair nature of Western diplomacy and that international respect came only through aggression, the possession of land, and power.

Ultimately it was the increased economic dependence on Western raw materials and Western consumers that hit Japan the hardest. The devastating effects of the Great Depression only heightened Japan's distrust of the modern world. Unemployment, hunger, and civil unrest aided those sectors of the national polity that promoted the policies of military expansion. On the continent of Asia, they proclaimed, Japan would find all of the resources and buyers they needed to continue their progress independent of the corrupting influence of the West. By expanding, they argued, Japan would be doing Asia's inhabitants a favor by ridding them of white Imperialists who had denied Japan its proper place in the world, and by bringing them the superior form of government encapsulated within the Imperial Way. A strong national pride backed by the tenets of Shinto and the desperation that follows economic duress insured the success of the expansionist movement.

Hence, by the commencement of hostilities on the Asian

continent, Japan's military had established a preeminent and leading role in Japanese society. Cultural traditions established over centuries of feudal rule aided the militarists as they preserved their predominant role, first established in 1185, in the formulation of national policy, independent of the civil government. Japanese society, coopted and indoctrinated by the conscription army and its auxiliary representatives in the rural villages, came to support the militarists in their effort to establish "National Unity." Careful cultivation of the Shinto cult encouraged the populace to accept the military as true leaders of the nation, representing the pure characteristics of Japanese culture.

Japanese militarism, as a political phenomenon, had at its base a purely Japanese, cultural foundation, and as such is distinct from similar occurrences elsewhere. It is time to recognize that useful definitions are not found in broad concepts such as militarism (or a presumed Japanese variant thereof), but are found in the unique or specific case such as militaristic Japan, democratic Russia, or communist China. The exploration of culturally based causal arguments demonstrate respect for the individuals, and nations that make up the human experience.

The development of state sponsored Shinto in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries strengthened Japan's naturally strong ethnic identity. Europe's highhanded diplomacy and the alien nature of Western civilization, despite its advancements in technology, encouraged a growing "insider-outsider" mentality within Japan that increasingly rejected participation in the Western diplomatic, and economic cabals which had conspired to deny Japan its true equal (or, to some, superior) position in the past. In a very real sense Japan's pre-war militarism can be defined as the mobilization of the entire society, drawing upon the essentially homogeneous nature of that society, to achieve a position within the international system which reflected the

cultural perception of Japan's "chosen" status (derived from centuries of Shinto influence) within the family of man. That the "alien" international system was largely defined at the time in Imperial-colonial-military terms only served to buttress the martial segments within Japanese society in justifying the expansion of their influence.

It is irresponsible to define Japanese militarism in broad terms when its true nature can only be understood within the context of the specific and unique properties of the local condition. Too often academia has attempted to create an "elemental table" of the human condition. Suggestions that terms such as militarism, democracy, and liberty represent universal constants ignore the true "atoms" of society: individuals. The interactivity of individuals form the molecules of life, the rules that they establish and follow, over time, become cultures which in turn combine together to form nations. Attempts at universality have ignored the fact that cultures evolve in different regions, under widely differing environmental conditions, and arrive at different communal conclusions, and different ethnic aspirations. By beginning to understand the development of militarism in Japan within the Japanese context, avoiding presumptuous applications of European concepts to other cultures, hastens the dawn of an understanding of the influence of militarism in Japan's future.

What does this conclusion imply for Japan? Clearly it suggests that Japanese "militarism," rooted in the very "Japaneseness" of that society, could not be destroyed simply by taking away the nation's military capabilities. Although the cultural aspiration to acquire recognition of Japan's "chosen" position as a leader within the international system met with disaster during World War Two the cultural belief in Japan's "chosen" status survived. The Emperor's statement, "Let the entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its

faith of the imperishableness of its divine land," charted the course for Japan's future. Alternative venues, distinct from military power, offered Japan the opportunity to rebuild, exercise influence, and to gain recognition of its leadership.

Japan's military emerged from the war completely discredited by the nation's defeat. The post-war constitution institutionalized this disgrace by renouncing the Japanese nation's right of belligerency, and forbidding the formation of an offensive force. Later, when the realities of the Cold-War forced a reconsideration of Japan's strategic role in North-East Asia, the newly created Self-Defense Forces were characterized by their purely defensive capabilities. Additionally, fearing the reemergence of military interference in civil government, the Japanese leadership implemented safeguards which effectively silenced the voice of the Defense Forces at the Cabinet level.

Instead, the prominent voices within the Japanese Cabinet rose from ministries focused upon economic policy. Their security guaranteed by a Treaty of Mutual Security and Cooperation with the United States, Japan's post-war leaders were free to pursue a special position in the world for their nation on the economic playing field. Systematically rebuilding its infrastructure, followed by the expansion of its export sector, Japan, by the beginning of the nineteen eighties, possessed one of the world's largest economies, dominating electronics, auto, and shipbuilding industries among others. Japan had garnered international respect and influence as an economic superpower.

As the Cold War ended Japan began to advance an increasingly sophisticated form of foreign policy based upon its economic success. Labeling its *business first* approach 'Comprehensive Security,' Japan pursued economic ties with its neighbors, and the rest of the world, while simultaneously promoting the idea that nations which trade

with each other are less likely to fight. Despite criticisms of Japan's limited involvement in the 1991-92 Persian Gulf War (generally depicted as "checkbook diplomacy") Japan has continued to pursue a role reflecting its chosen status in the family of man.

Throughout the nineteen seventies and eighties, Japan characterized itself as the spokesman for Asia in Western dominated councils such as the G-Seven economic conference. Additionally Japan has sought a leading position in regional formats such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings. In perhaps the most telling example of Japan's vision of itself as a leader of nations, Japan's Prime Minister in 1993 hinted that his nation would be pleased to accept a seat as a permanent member (with veto power) on the prestigious Security Council of the United Nations. In a show of growing confidence this hint was followed up in 1994 by an outright announcement of Japan's qualifications, as a leading economic power, as the world's only constitutionally mandated pacifist nation, and as the only nation in the world to have actually experienced the horrors of a nuclear attack, for the prestigious seat.

Reminders of militarist Japan still remain. The force of hundreds of years of warrior rule emerge from time to time in seemingly random acts of ultra-nationalism and extremist-violence. Many in Japan, including some Cabinet Ministers, have yet to openly acknowledge the atrocities committed by Japanese forces in World War II, but the recurrent difficulty in recruiting quality candidates for service in the Self Defense Forces, and the agonizing nature of the debate over enlarging the role of those forces reveal a deep seated suspicion of traditional militar activities.

Japan has learned its lesson militarily. It now realizes the inherent vulnerabilities of a nation isolated on the edge of the massive Asian continent, lacking even the most rudimentary raw materials to fuel its economy.

However, as its culture develops under the momentum of its own dynamism as well as its continued exposure to external ideas, Japan has heeded and will continue to follow, the Emperor's command to, "work with resolution so as ye may enhance the innate glory of the Imperial State" by pursuing the establishment and recognition of its "chosen" position within the family of man through economic and diplomatic means.



## APPENDIX A

### EMPEROR MEIJI'S IMPERIAL RESCRIPT ON EDUCATION

Know Ye, Our Subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and obey the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye be not only Our good and faithful subjects but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by their descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true for all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may all attain the same virtue.

(Imperial Sign Manual)



## APPENDIX B

### EMPEROR MEIJI'S IMPERIAL RESCRIPT TO SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

The forces of Our Empire are in all ages under the command of the Emperor. It is more than twenty-five centuries since the Emperor Jimmu, leading in person the soldiers of the Otomo and Minonobe' clans, subjugated the unruly tribes of the land and ascended the Imperial Throne to rule over the whole country. During this period the military system has undergone frequent changes in accordance with those in the state of society. In ancient times the rule was that the Emperor should take personal command of the forces; and although the military authority was sometimes delegated to the Empress or to the Prince Imperial, it was scarcely ever entrusted to a subject. In the Middle Ages, when the civil and military institutions were framed after the Chinese model, the Six Guards were founded, the Right and Left Horse Bureaus established, and other organizations, such as that of the Coast Guards, created. The military system was thus completed, but habituated to a prolonged state of peace, the Imperial Court gradually lost its administrative vigour; in course of time soldiers and farmers became distinct classes, and the early conscription system was replaced by an organization of volunteers, which finally produced the military class. The military power passed over entirely to the leaders of this class; through disturbances in the Empire the political power also fell into their hands; and for about seven centuries the military families held sway. Although these results followed from changes in the state of society and were deeply to be deplored, since they were contrary to the fundamental character of Our Empire and to the law of Our Imperial Ancestors. Later on, in the eras of Kokwa and Kaei, the decline of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the new aspect of foreign relations even threatened to impair our national dignity, causing no small anxiety to Our August

Grandfather, the Emperor Ninko, and Our August Father, the Emperor Komei, a fact which We recall with awe and gratitude. When in youth We succeeded to the Imperial Throne, the Shogun returned into Our hands the administrative power, and all the feudal lords their fiefs; thus, in a few years, Our entire realm was unified and the ancient regime restored. Due as this was to the meritorious services of Our loyal officers and wise councilors, civil and military, and to the abiding influence of Our Ancestors' benevolence towards the people, yet it must also be attributed to Our subjects' true sense of loyalty and their conviction of the importance of "Great Righteousness." In consideration of these things, being desirous of reconstructing Our military system and enhancing the glory of Our Empire, We have in the course of the last fifteen years established the present system of the Army and Navy. The supreme command of Our forces is in Our hands, and although We may entrust subordinate commands to Our subjects, yet the ultimate authority We Ourself shall hold and never delegate to any subject. It is Our will that this principle be carefully handed down to posterity and that the Emperor always remain the supreme civil and military power, so that the disgrace of the middle and succeeding ages may never be repeated. Soldiers and Sailors, We are your supreme Commander-in-Chief. Our relations with you will be most intimate when We rely upon you as Our limbs and you look up to Us as your head. Whether We are able to guard the Empire, and so prove Ourself worthy of heaven's blessing and repay the benevolence of Our Ancestors depends upon the faithful discharge of your duties as soldiers and sailors. If the majesty and power of Our Empire be impaired, do you share with Us the sorrow; if the glory of Our arms shine resplendent, We will share with you the honour. If you all do your duty, and being one with Us in spirit do your utmost for the protection of the State, Our people will long enjoy the blessings of peace, and the might and dignity of Our

Empire will shine in the world. As We thus expect much of you, Soldiers and Sailors, We give you the following precepts:-

(1) The soldier and the sailor should consider loyalty their essential duty. Who that is born in this land can be wanting in the spirit of grateful service to it? No soldier or sailor, especially, can be considered efficient unless this spirit be strong within him. A soldier or a sailor in whom this spirit is not strong, however well ordered and disciplined it may be, is in an emergency no better than a rabble. Remember that, as the protection of the State and the maintenance of its power depend upon the strength of its arms, the growth or decline of this strength must affect the nation's destiny for good or for evil; therefore neither be led astray by current opinions nor meddle in politics, but with single heart fulfil your essential duty of loyalty, and bear in mind that duty is weightier than a mountain, while death is lighter than a feather. Never by failing in moral principle fall into disgrace and bring dishonour upon your name.

(2) The soldier and the sailor should be strict in observing propriety. Soldiers and sailors are organized in grades, from the Marshal and the Admiral of the Fleet down to the private soldier or ordinary seamen; and even within the same rank and grade there are differences in seniority of service according to which juniors should submit to their seniors. Inferiors should regard the orders of their superiors as issuing directly from Us. Always pay due respect not only to your superiors but also to your seniors, even though not serving under them. On the other hand, superiors should never treat their inferiors with contempt or arrogance. Except when official duty requires them to be strict and severe, superiors should treat their inferiors with consideration, making kindness their chief aim, so that all grades may unite in their service to the Emperor. If you, Soldiers and Sailors, neglect to observe propriety,

treating your superiors with disrespect and your inferiors with harshness, and thus cause harmonious co-operation to be lost, you will not only be a blight upon the forces but also be unpardonable offenders against the State.

(3) The soldier and the sailor should esteem valour. Ever since the ancient times valour has in our country been held in high esteem, and without it Our subjects would be unworthy of their name. How, then, may the soldier and the sailor, whose profession it is to confront the enemy in battle, forget even for one instant to be valiant? But there is true valour and false. To be incited by mere impetuosity to violent action cannot be called true valour. The soldier and the sailor should have sound discrimination of right and wrong, cultivate self-possession, and form their plans with deliberation. Never to despise an inferior enemy or fear a superior, but to do one's duty as soldier or sailor--this is true valour. Those who thus appreciate true valour should in their daily intercourse set gentleness first and aim to win the love and esteem of others. If you affect valour and act with violence, the world will in the end detest you and look upon you as wild beasts. Of this you should take heed.

(4) The soldier and the sailor should highly value faithfulness and righteousness. Faithfulness and righteousness are the ordinary duties of man, but the soldier and the sailor, in particular, cannot be without them and remain in the ranks even for a day. Faithfulness implies the keeping of one's word, and righteousness the fulfillment of one's duty. If then you wish to be faithful and righteous in anything, you must carefully consider at the outset whether you can accomplish it or not. If you thoughtlessly agree to do something that is vague in its nature and bind yourself to unwise obligations, and then try to prove yourself faithful and righteous, you may find yourself in great straits from which there is no escape. In such cases your regrets will be of no avail. hence you

must first make sure whether the thing is righteous and reasonable or not. If you are convinced that you cannot possibly keep your word and maintain righteousness, you had better abandon your engagement at once. Ever since the ancient times there have been repeated instances of great men and heroes who, overwhelmed by misfortune, have perished and left a tarnished name to posterity, simply because in their effort to be faithful in small matters they failed to discern right and wrong with reference to fundamental principles, or because, losing sight of the true path of public duty, they kept faith in private relations. You should, then, take serious warnings by these examples.

(5) The soldier and the sailor should make simplicity their aim. If they do not make simplicity your aim, you will become effeminate and frivolous and acquire fondness for luxurious and extravagant ways; you will finally grow selfish and sordid and sink to the last degree of baseness, so that neither loyalty nor valour will avail to save you from the contempt of the world. It is not too much to say that you will thus fall into a life-long misfortune. If such an evil once makes its appearance among soldiers and sailors, it will certainly spread like an epidemic, and martial spirit and morale will instantly decline. Although, being greatly concerned on this point, We lately issued this Disciplinary Regulations and warned you against this evil, nevertheless, being harassed with anxiety lest it should break out, We hereby reiterate Our warning. Never do you, Soldiers and Sailors, make light of this injunction.

These five articles should not be disregarded even for a moment by soldiers and sailors. Now for putting them into practice, the all important is sincerity. These five articles are the soul of Our soldiers and sailors, and sincerity is the soul of these articles. If the heart be not sincere, words and deeds, however good, are all mere outward show can avail nothing. If only the heart be sincere, anything can be accomplished. Moreover, these five

articles are the Grand Way of heaven and Earth and the universal law of humanity, easy to observe and to practice. If you, Soldiers and Sailors, in obedience to and to fulfil your duty of grateful service to the country, it will be a source of joy, not to Ourselves alone, but to all people of Japan.

The 4th day of the 1st month of the 15th Year of Meiji.

(Imperial Sign Manual)

## APPENDIX C

### PROCLAMATION BY THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS, UNITED STATES, CHINA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

(1) We, the President of the United States, the President of the National Government of the Republic of China and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, representing the hundreds of millions of our countrymen, have conferred and agree that Japan shall be given an opportunity to end this war.

(2) The prodigious land, sea and air forces of the United States, the British Empire and of China, many times reinforced by their armies and air fleets from the west are poised to strike the final blows upon Japan. This military power is sustained and inspired by the determination of all the Allied nations to prosecute the war against Japan until she ceases to resist.

(3) The result of the futile and senseless German resistance to the might of the aroused free peoples of the world stands forth in awful clarity as an example to the people of Japan. The might that now converges on Japan is measurably greater than that which, when applied to the resisting Nazis, necessarily laid waste to the lands, the industry and the method of life of the whole German people. The full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, will mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese armed forces and just as inevitably the utter destruction of the Japanese homeland.

(4) The time has come for Japan to decide whether she will continue to be controlled by those self-willed militaristic advisors whose unintelligent calculations have wrought the Empire of Japan to the threshold of annihilation, or whether she will follow the path of reason.

(5) Following are our terms. We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.

(6) There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist

that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world.

(7) Until such a new order is established and until there is convincing proof that Japan's war-making power is destroyed, points in Japanese territory to be designated by the Allies shall be occupied to secure the achievement of the basic objectives we are here setting forth.

(8) The terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out and Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku, and such minor islands as we determine.

(9) The Japanese military forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives.

(10) We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelty upon our prisoners. The Japanese government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established.

(11) Japan shall be permitted to maintain such industries as will sustain her economy and permit the exaction of just reparations in kind, but not those industries which would enable her to re-arm for war. To this end, access to, as distinguished from control of raw materials shall be permitted. Eventually Japanese participation in world trade relations shall be permitted.

(12) The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government.

(13) We call upon the Government of Japan to proclaim now

the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces,  
and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good  
faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is prompt  
and utter destruction.

Potsdam July 26, 1945

Harry S. Truman  
Winston Churchill  
Chiang Kai-shek



## APPENDIX D

### THE IMPERIAL RESCRIPT OF AUGUST 14, 1945

To Our good and loyal subjects:

After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining in Our Empire today, We have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure.

We have ordered Our Government to communicate to the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union that Our Empire accepts the provisions of their Joint Declaration.

To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations as well as the security and well being of Our subjects is the solemn obligation which has been handed down by Our Imperial Ancestors, and which We lay close to heart. Indeed, We declared war on America and Britain out of Our sincere desire to ensure Japan's self preservation and the stabilization of East Asia, it being far from Our thought either to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark territorial aggrandizement. But now the war has lasted for nearly four years. Despite the best that has been done by everyone--the gallant fighting of military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of Our servants of the State and the devoted service of Our one hundred million people, the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest. Moreover, the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is indeed incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. Should We continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization. Such being the case, how are We to save millions of Our subjects; or to atone Ourselves before the hallowed spirits of our Imperial

Ancestors? This is the reason why We have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Powers.

We cannot but express the deepest sense of regret to our Allied nations of East Asia, who have consistently cooperated with the Empire towards the emancipation of East Asia. The thought of those officers and men as well as others who have fallen in the fields of battle, those who died at their posts of duty, or those who met with untimely death and all their bereaved families, pains Our heart night and day. The welfare of the wounded and the war-sufferers, and of those who have lost their homes and livelihood, are the subjects of Our profound solicitude. The hardships and sufferings to which Our nation is to be subjected hereafter will be certainly great. We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all ye, Our subjects. However, it is according to the dictate of time and fate that We have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable.

Having been able to safeguard and maintain the structure of the Imperial State, We are always with ye, Our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity. Beware most strictly of any outbursts of emotion which may engender needless complications, or any fraternal contention and strife which may create confusion, lead ye astray and cause ye to lose the confidence of the world. Let the entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its faith of the imperishableness of its divine land, and mindful of its heavy burden of responsibilities, and the long road before it. Unite your total strength to be devoted to the construction for the future. Cultivate the ways of rectitude; foster nobility of spirit; and work with resolution so as ye may enhance the

innate glory of the Imperial State and keep pace with the progress of the world.

(Imperial Sign Manual)

(Imperial Seal)

The 14th day of the 8th month  
of the 20th year of Showa.



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